

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

f California
Regional
Facility

MARIE VAN VORST

KS/-

UCSB LIBRARY

X-87520



WAR LETTERS OF
AN AMERICAN WOMAN

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation





THE AUTHOR AT SALSOMAGGIORE, SEPTEMBER, 1915

WAR LETTERS OF
AN AMERICAN WOMAN
BY MARIE VAN VORST
WITH ELEVEN ILLUSTRATIONS

LONDON : JOHN LANE, THE BODLEY HEAD
NEW YORK : JOHN LANE COMPANY MCMXVI

WILLIAM CLOWES AND SONS, LIMITED, LONDON AND BECCLES, ENGLAND

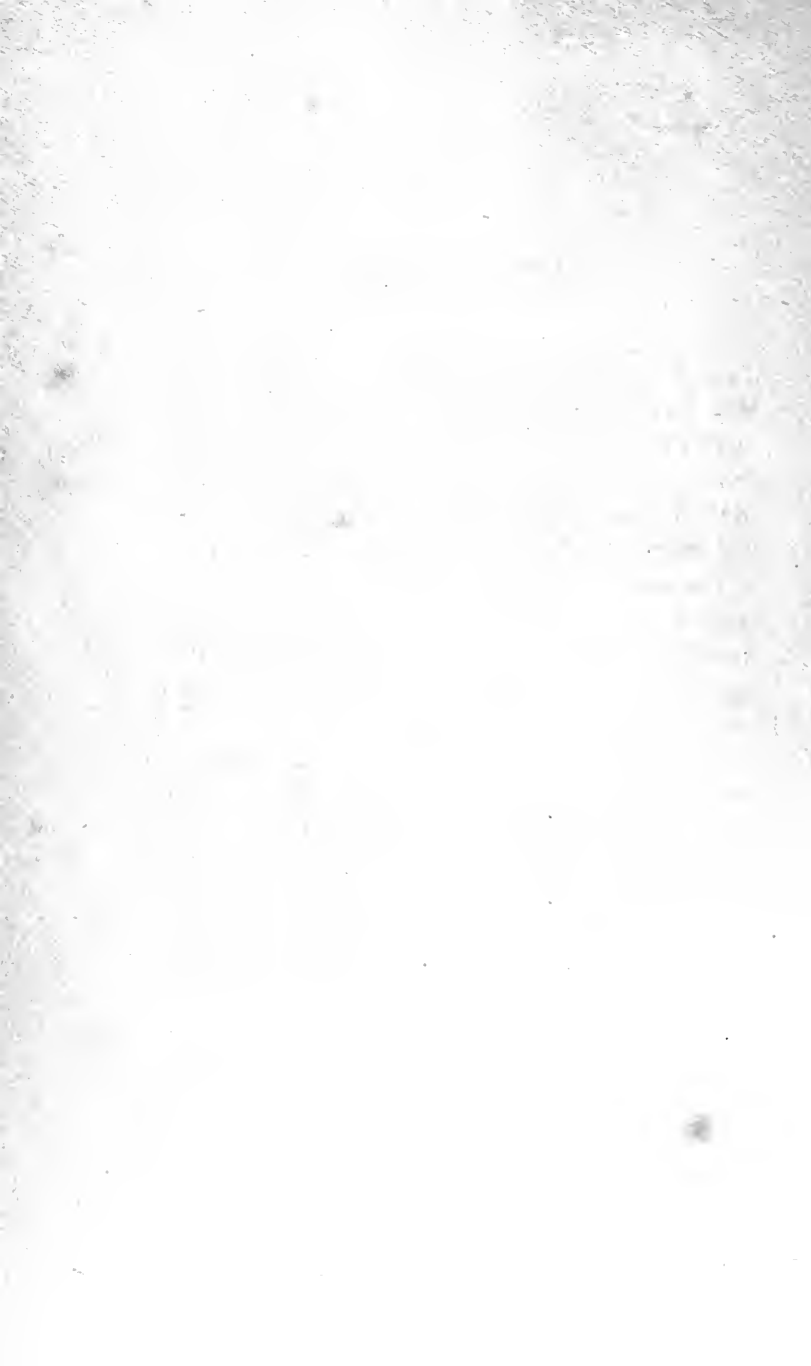
DEDICATION

I INSCRIBE these letters, written during the Great War in the countries at war, to Comte HENRY DADVISARD, Captain of the First Regiment of Cuirassiers, which he left voluntarily to join the 66th Regiment of Infantry, in order to give himself more entirely to the defence of his country.

The memory of this gallant soldier of France is to me a precious and a cherished memory. I shall recall him always as one of the most vivid spirits, one of the most brilliant intellects, one of the finest men I ever knew.

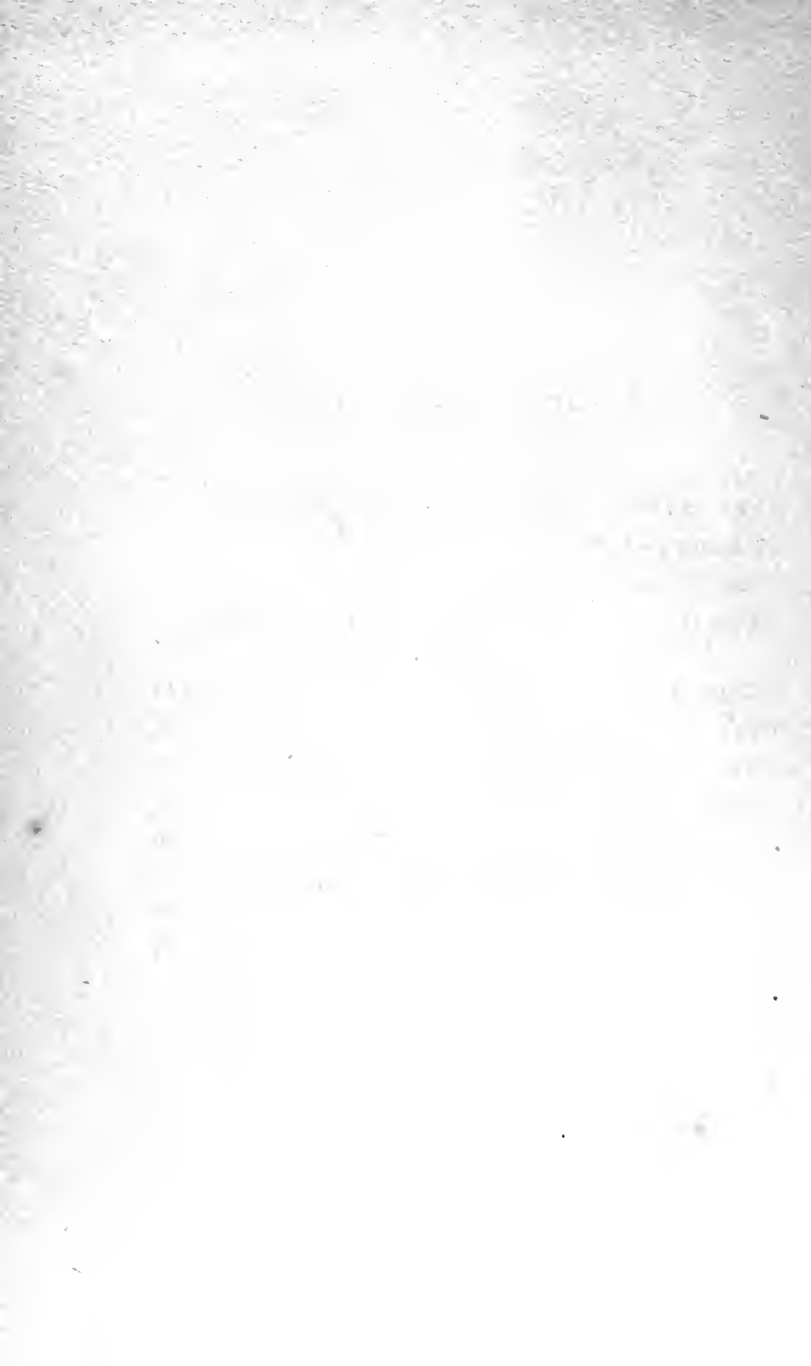
This young Frenchman fought and fell gloriously, as hundreds of thousands of young Englishmen and Frenchmen have fought and fallen gloriously. Their spirit lives, their courage and patriotism live, to animate and inspire these allied nations, whom no less spiritual power will ever conquer, and with whose Cause is the ultimate victory.

M. V. V.



LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	FACE PAGE
THE AUTHOR	<i>Frontispiece</i>
HUGUES LE ROUX	14
MRS. VICTOR MORAWETZ	48
A WARD IN THE AMERICAN AMBULANCE AT NEUILLY	110
MADAME HUGUES LE ROUX	140
THE HON. ROBERT BACON	190
MRS. BENJAMIN GUINNESS	204
VICOMTE EDGAR DE BRESSON	218
DR. JOSEPH BLAKE	246
MRS. WILLIAM K. VANDERBILT AND MRS. GEORGE MUNROE	250
COMTE HENRY DADVISARD	296



WAR LETTERS OF
AN AMERICAN WOMAN



To Signor Gaetano Cagiati, Vallombrosa.

4, PLACE DU PALAIS BOURBON, PARIS,
July 15th, 1914.

MY DEAR GAETANO,

I think your idea that I should come down to Vallombrosa and spend a month there and finish my book is splendid. The very name "Vallombrosa" has no end of charm. It sounds like shadows. I can fancy great wooded distances. It sounds dark and cool and remote.

I have always wanted to see Italy in mid-summer. I want awfully to know the country around Florence in summer time. There are such beautiful descriptions of it in the "Lys Rouge."

Do you think you could get me a nice little suite of rooms in an inexpensive hotel? You must be sure that there is a balcony with a view of Florence from it. I shall bring my secretary and my maid, and finish "Mary Moreland," and begin my new novel, "Carmichel's Past." It will be too much fun for words to work in that silence, and then have some long walks with you and see the baby.

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

If she is anything like her photograph, she is a darling little creature.

Then, too, it will be amusing to see the Italian life. I long to come. Let me know what the possibilities are.

Yours as ever,
M.

To Miss Mabel McGinnis, Rome.

4, PLACE DU PALAIS BOURBON, PARIS,
July 20th, 1914.

DEAREST MABEL,

I shall see you, I hope, for I am coming to Italy. I want to go to Vallombrosa for the month of August and see something of Margaret's little child and Gaetano. After Vallombrosa (and you may even care to come there, too), we'll do something together.

Mabel, I've only been home here in Paris a short while, and yet I am keen to get away. My little house is settled and charming, and yet in it I have the most curious spirit of unrest. Mabel, I don't know what it is, but there seems a *menace* over everything. What can it mean? In all my life I have never had such a strange, strained, tense feeling. Sometimes at night I can't sleep and on several occasions I've gotten up and thrown

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

open my shutters and looked out over the familiar little Place, over the roofs, to the sky ; and the most curious sense of *peril* seems to brood over everything in sight. What can it mean ? There have been times when I could hardly catch my breath for the oppression on my heart.

Of course it's purely physical. You would think that I should feel more at peace in my own home ; but I want to get away. I am glad I am going to Italy. I long to go.

Yours as ever,
M.

To Signor Gaetano Cagiati, Vallombrosa.

PARIS, July 25th, 1914.

MY DEAR GAETANO,

You can't think with what joy I look forward to Italy. The strange spirit of unrest here is now taking a more definite form. On every one's lips is the question : " Will there be war ? "

Of course, my point of view is as little interesting as possible, but I think there will. Hugues Le Roux, however, for whose opinion I have the greatest respect, laughed at me when I said so, so I fancy I am too easily alarmed.

" Rassurez-vous," he said to me yesterday ;

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

"et partez en paix. Enjoy Italy to the full. There will not be any war, my dear."

Of course, if there should be war, it wouldn't last long—not in the twentieth century; and no one wants it. There would be, perhaps, a few skirmishes on the frontiers, and then everything would be arranged diplomatically.

So look out for us next week. We'll be along.

As ever,

M.

To Mr. Cagiati, Vallombrosa.

PARIS, July 30th, 1914.

MY DEAR GAETANO,

All the pretty things I've had made to wear at Vallombrosa, all the pretty things I've had made to bring down for the baby, will lie around in trunks or hang about unused. We're not coming down to Italy, my dear friend.

This will be a disappointment to you. It is a great one to me. But, as I telegraphed you, we're not coming.

This afternoon, I had all my trunks on the omnibus. I was just getting in with my dressing case, when I thought I'd go over and take a last farewell of Bessie—see her once more before I went away. As I went in, I found Robert Le Roux having tea with her. Just as soon as I



HUGUES LE ROUX

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

came in, he got up quickly and came over and took my hand and said :

“ Ma chère amie, vous ne pouvez pas partir pour l'Italie ! ”

“ But, Robert, why not ? ”

“ Vous ne pouvez pas partir.”

“ But all my trunks are on the omnibus, and I've got my tickets ! We're just ready to go ! ”

“ *Ne partez pas.* ”

His tone was so serious that, even as I spoke, I felt a whole wave of apprehension rush over me ; and just in that moment it seemed as though this menace that I'd felt was beginning to take form.

“ You mean—— ” I began.

“ Vous aurez peut-être des ennuis,” he said, “ if you wanted to come back hurriedly to your mother.”

“ Robert,” I said, “ you really mean to say that you think it's so serious ? ”

I shall never forget the face of that Frenchman as he answered me, never !

“ Ma chère Marie, *c'est la Guerre !* ”

* * * * *

My dear Gaetano, the trees of Vallombrosa will shed their beautiful leaves and I shall not see them fall.

God alone knows whether what Le Roux fears will come true. Heavens, what will it mean !

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

To-night, as I sit here writing to you, in my little study high above this beautiful and beloved Paris, I can only hear that one sentence ringing its sinister and tragic message through my heart and brain :

" C'est la Guerre."

M.

To Mrs. Victor Morawetz, New York.

CAVENDISH HOTEL, LONDON, August 4th, 1914.

MY DEAR VIOLET,

My first cable from Paris gave you Parr's Bank as my address in London. . . . That was last week, when people were fairly fighting for funds in Paris. I have had no letters from you since the war cloud rose, but I am sure that you have tried to reach me, and that you are all of you ignorant of the money crisis here. . . .

Molly would not come across the Channel with me, but said she preferred returning to Deauville to stay with the Kings. She said John King was a splendid manager and would take fine care of her, and that it was wonderful to be with a man at a time like this, and with a man who had plenty of money—good reasons! But nevertheless, a mere woman, with a very limited sum of money,

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

I left Paris successfully, taking my secretary, three servants, and all my luggage and all Mother's luggage, and moving Mother—no joke—to London. Two hours after I left, there were thousands fighting for entrance at the Gare du Nord, and thousands of pieces of luggage were left to wait or take what fate befell them in the station. I feel rather more shamed than anything else to have been so successful when millionaires and *men* all over the country have not been able to get out of France yet.

I did not want to get out. It has taken me three days to write this letter and I don't like even to speak of what I have been through. It has not been material hardship, but moral and mental and spiritual, to the extent of the greatest strain possible. . . . I put off going as long as I could, and was just about to go in to dinner with Bessie and Robert Le Roux when Molly called me up on the telephone and said she had arrived from Deauville to say good-bye to her brother, who was going through to Switzerland in his car to fetch his children from St. Moritz. It was eight o'clock at night. I found Molly at the Rhin and we talked about the situation, which was then perfectly calm and in no wise decisive ; and I begged her to come to London with me next day. . . . I sat with her in the dear old Rhin till midnight,

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

then walked quietly home, at half-past twelve, through the Tuileries, under the moonlight. The streets were not in the least excited. You see, the troops had not even been mobilised. Nothing was decisive—only the horrible, horrible strain in the air. When I got to the Quai d'Orsay Hotel, I wanted awfully to speak to Le Roux, and I called him downstairs. He was very agitated and said that Jaurès had just been assassinated on the boulevard and that war was inevitable. I did not tell him my project to leave, but went home to my house. . . . It was so tranquil and lovely—everything in such beautiful order and so sweet. I wondered whether I had better try to stock the place with provisions the following day and remain; but I then decided that it would be difficult for Mother to go about in Paris, and that as I could not protect her, I had no right to consider anything but her safety.

It's hardly necessary to say that I did not close my eyes, and I thought out the best route to go quietly to London. At four o'clock in the morning I called up the Gare du Nord, and just as soon as the telephonist told me that they had not been able to talk with them all night long, I knew that Newhaven would be best. I ordered an omnibus from the Gare St. Lazare, then through the telephone I told Mother's companion to

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

prepare to leave the house at eight o'clock in the morning, with everything she could take—not because I feared a siege, but because I thought I should probably never be able to bring Mother back to Paris.

I did not wake my own servants till five ; then I called them downstairs and after once telling them what I wanted, I knew that I should have no further need to think what should be done, for they were so capable and so perfect. I told them I wanted to take as much as I could with me and to leave at eight. Meanwhile, Webb had already packed all my personal things for Italy, where—as you know—I was to have gone two days earlier. I gave that up because of the uncertainty of being able to return. Then I called up my secretary at her hotel and told her to be ready as well. . . . When the station omnibus came, it refused to take my luggage. Just then, I saw a wine delivery-truck going up the Rue de Bourgogne, and I stopped the man and offered him twenty francs to take all my things to the station. He accepted. My secretary went up to fetch Mother, and my maid and the manservant went to the station with the luggage. I took the man on account of Mother, not knowing whether she might be taken ill on the way, and meaning to send him back from Newhaven, as he is a Frenchman and of

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

course I had no intention of keeping him. My little cook Rose, whom you remember, so sweet and pretty, cried and begged me to take her with me. Then I paid no more attention to my mobilised army, but went over to see Molly again and we went to the American Express to book passages on the *France* for her return to America. They had to pay frs.12,000 for their accommodation, and there was a perfect fight and mob in the shipping office. As my train left at ten, you will see that I hadn't much time. Telling Molly that if I could possibly do so and feel it safe, I would let Mother go on with her escort and come back to her and take a later train, I left her. At the train, I found everything most perfectly put through. It only looked like an ordinary August exodus—rather crowded and rushed, but no frightful excitement. Mother was sitting there enthroned, and after sitting by her side and realising the efficiency of every one around her and that all would go well, I left her and went back to Molly and Bessie. When I got outside the station, there was the carriage waiting for me and by the wheel stood Bessie, who had come to see me off. We went together back to the American Express and found Molly, and we stayed together for a little time and then took Molly to her train at one o'clock, when she made a very passable sortie with her maid and

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

all her luggage. I mention these details because so soon afterwards the aspect was changed. If we had not gone when we did, probably I and my party could not have gone at all—certainly not with any belongings—and probably Mother would have collapsed, as people were trampled on later. . . . I went away with no personal *élan* whatever. . . . I wanted to stay in the place I love the best in the world. . . . All the way to Dieppe I was alone in the carriage—just fancy!—and on the next train they were hanging on to the carriages! When I reached Dieppe, they told me that no boat would go out for days and I began to drink in the fact that probably I should not be able to get across the Channel to Mother, who had gone on serenely. I had just decided to take the train back to Paris when the counter-news came that the boat would run at midnight. . . . I don't think I had anything to eat for two days. (I can't remember a meal at all.) I did eat something then and took a bath and rested, going on board at one o'clock in the morning, and then the rush had begun. Three boats went out that night and not one article of luggage came through from Paris!

When I got here, I found the family comfortably installed. . . . I have taken a small house just outside London for Mother, and she goes there to-day with her companion. . . .

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

The aspect of London is thrilling. The city is full of manifestants all the time—processions of them going through the streets cheering for France and going down to Buckingham Palace. I do not feel that anyone who is not closely in touch with the political question can judge of England's tardy decision, because they must be preparing for some *coup*, and perhaps the very hesitation will be for France's ultimate benefit. But the strain beggars description and if felt here like this, so that we can almost feel the tension snap, what must it be in Paris? Every one has been enthusiastic here over the quiet dignity of the French and the way they have borne this wait. I personally feel most secure in the fact that France is going to be victorious. It couldn't be otherwise. . . .

I hope that the American enthusiasm is strong for the country that stood by it in the War of Independence. . . .

There have been no mails through from France to-day. . . .

The fact that England is a partial ally is a comfort, but it is hard enough to be here as I am, even in these circumstances. . . .

My plan is to return to Paris, if I can get through, once I am convinced of Mother's safety here. . . .

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

To Mr. Gaetano Cagiati, Rome.

LONDON, August 7th, 1914.

DEAR GAETANO,

. . . I am full of enthusiasm over the attitude of the countries I love—France, where my heart is so deeply, and, as you know, my home for twenty-five years ; Belgium, where my cousins are and whose ancestry is close to mine—for I am Dutch and French ; and now Italy, holding out against this brutal tyranny, this barbaric, disgusting materialism. It would have been a cruel blow to me if Italy had turned against France—just one blow more ! How glad I am that she did not ! I foresee the fact that Italy will have to fight and that perhaps they will call upon older men to go to service. . . . And then England, interesting in the extreme ! I am so grateful not to be in an unfriendly country. . . .

What a different August to the one we planned ! . . .

To Bessie van Vorst, Paris.

Aug. 14th, 1914.

. . . We hear all sorts of rumours. Would you tell me if they are correct ? That the

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

Champs Elysées is a vast camp for soldiers, that people are held up by sentries in the streets at the point of the bayonet ; that nobody goes out after eight at night, and that Paris is not lighted ? A friend of M.'s who has just arrived took thirty-six hours to come . . .

We understand that there are 50,000 English in Amiens and 50,000 in Brussels. The Territorials fill the streets and are camping in some of the big parks. . . .

I also hear that there is no milk in Paris. Tell me everything. . . .

Molly came in at 2 o'clock to-day. . . . She says that their life at Deauville had become impossible. They had to get a fresh *permis de séjour* every day—all of them. . . .

We are kept in complete darkness regarding the movement of troops. No one in England knows where the soldiers are.

To Mr. Cagiati, Rome.

Aug. 14th, 1914.

MY DEAR GAETANO,

. . . How far away the peaceful days of *autrefois* seem, and how impossible the evening walks across the Place de la Concorde and the gardens of the Tuileries ! They tell me no one is

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

allowed abroad in Paris after dark, but I am ignorant of the state of the city beyond what you read in Bessie's letters. . . .

We do not know how safe England is. How can we know, or what the food problem will be? although every one is optimistic and the Government is acting magnificently all along the line.

The state of affairs seems to have awakened the verse-writing spirit and there have been several beautiful poems in the papers. And I think the editorials of the papers themselves are stunning. I have sent you some clippings. . . .

For the past ten days we have been working five hours a day, taking the Red Cross lectures. We were supposed to do in twelve consecutive lessons what, as a rule, it takes twelve weeks to perform. The class looked for twenty members and two thousand came! It is taught by the most celebrated Red Cross man in Europe—Dr. Cantlie, the writer of the manuals—and it was an extraordinary piece of luck to come under his instruction. The work is fascinating and it has served to fill in these dreary days of strain, loneliness and indecision. I took the first examination yesterday, but could not hope to pass and am perfectly prepared to fail and to begin again next week. The time was too short. But I am going

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

to do it to the finish. . . . There were funny sides to it—the crowds of English spinsters who rushed to the fore, and the little messenger boys who were haled in from the streets to be bandaged. But when you think that only eight hours' journey from us four million men are on the battlefield, it will not be astonishing if many hands are needed, and if all the hands are not expert, they will be better than nothing. There has never been such a horrible condition of affairs in the history of the world, and *you*, so far away, quiet and protected, cannot imagine what the mental strain is of waiting for the news. It is a moment of big issues and I think that souls will be bigger for the times. Certainly the attitude of England, all the way down the file, has been superb. And as for Germany, I don't know what you've heard, but its barbaric atrocities have disgusted and horrified the very coldest of judges. Their last deed was to put women and children before the ranks of soldiers, so that the French would not fire upon them.

. . . It takes 36 hours to get back to Paris, and lines of red tape, and passports, and all sorts of formalities ; and now that I have no servants I don't know what I shall do. . . . It is lonely here and it will be lonely there.

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

To Miss B. S. Andrews, New York.

LONDON, August 18th, 1914.

It is hard to believe that anything so beautiful and so unspoilt as London can exist in this twentieth century. I have never been here so long at one time. Think of that! The streets are full of picturesque sights. The other night on Piccadilly, I saw a poor stone-blind man with his little dog, tapping his way along the pavement with his stick. A news vendor stopped to give him *viva-voce* the last war news: I heard him whisper it in the poor fellow's ear. . . .

I have never realized before how lovely the houses are. Town houses of all possible colours—white as snow, their window-boxes full of pale pink geraniums; a pea-green house with red doors. None of them over three stories high in any of these streets. And of all the softest shades and tones.

Then there's the brown cloud of soldiers, driven here and there through the streets—the Territorials in their dust-coloured uniforms flowing in from the country-side everywhere—picturesque and ominous. These forces are to be exchanged for the troops from India, when they arrive. The military precision, the quiet

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

strength with which all these operations have been carried out, the secrecy, and the patience of the people, have been very impressive. . . .

When you receive this letter, you will probably know more than I know now. Perhaps some terrible continental disaster will have saddened this England that now so gallantly and in such a dignified way sends its brotherly response to France and Belgium.

. . . This morning I went to the hospital and worked with the Red Cross people until half-past one. Then luncheon. Then a lecture from two till five. . . .

You are following the course of this war and I need not refer to any of the details. Our personal safety is your chief interest. It seems assured. German successes would change our feelings, of course. Aeroplanes might drop their bombs upon us. But we only think of victory. The German spy business here is a vital question, and they say that the proprietor of the Astoria in Paris was shot and the hotel closed. . . .

I am working for my Red Cross examinations and enjoying the work tremendously. . . .

Mother is in a little house . . . surrounded by a perfectly beautiful garden, in an ideal country village. I went out there on Sunday and found

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

her sitting by the garden gate, with two wash pitchers full of cold tea, and a tray of sandwiches, giving them out to the soldiers. Ten thousand poor fellows passed her door that day, and she was enjoying the rôle of Lady Bountiful very much indeed.

F. B. Van Vorst, Hackensack.

LONDON, August 22nd, 1914.

MY DEAR FREDERICK,

I have asked one or two of my friends to mail you letters which may interest you and Mary. . . .

Personal friends of ours—young girls and an older lady—have just come through from Germany with the greatest difficulty. The young ladies were stripped by German officers, who insulted them, and the mother was put in prison. They are going to see President Wilson and make a public case of it. All that has happened has not even been told us.

I had a letter to-day from Margaret Goblet d'Alviella in Brussels, to whom I wrote. Felix is a Municipal Councillor. Far away as you are in your peaceful and normal U.S.A., you can't take in what the strain is, or, on the other hand, what the control has been among the Anglo-

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

Saxons—and the Latins too. We over here hope that the pulse of America is not too tightly compressed by the thumbs of the Wall Street clique. I remember that you told me some time ago that no one dreams how America is influenced by that colossally rich Hebraic band.

The Kaiser is a bloodthirsty lunatic and his whole country is his machine, trained to execute blindly his commands. Children have been thrown on the flames of burning houses. Women with child have been slaughtered before the eyes of the inhabitants. And these things come to us here through circumstantial evidence (which of course in some courts is not accepted).

. . . Well, if you live for money, you get it ; and if you live for Empire, you get St. Helena, and I hope William II. will get it neck and crop.

I have finished my Red Cross examinations, all but one. . . .

It has been very interesting here and very picturesque—troops going to the war, and the leave-takings ; and if one can forget what is transpiring across the Channel, there is a certain pleasurable excitement in being on the spot. . . .

. . . You will hear enough of everything that is going on, without my writing you ; and please put up your prayers for the overthrow of the most

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

disgusting lot of human beings that ever guzzled and raped and went through the world with sword and fire. . . .

Letter to the "New York Sun."

SIR,

If the millions of Germans in our country have become Americanised and citizens of the United States in sincerity, it is time for them to adopt and reflect the attitude of its liberty-loving and civilised people. If they are *not* sincere citizens, then they should return to fight for their country. They can only, given the fact that they *are* American citizens, loyally echo the opinions of the New York Press on the barbarous methods of the Kaiser's modern warfare. An indication of this *modus operandi* was given in his orders to his troops in China in 1900 : " When you meet the foe, you will defeat him. No quarter will be given, no prisoners taken. Let all who fall into your hands be at your mercy. Gain a reputation like the Huns under Attila." There is no reason to suppose that his point of view has changed. Rape, the murder of defenceless women and children, the levelling of homes, indignities inflicted not only upon the people with whom he

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

is at war, but upon citizens of neutral and supposedly friendly countries, have marked the passing of the Kaiser's soldiers from Germany to the little city they have ingloriously overwhelmed.

This war, from the beginning, stultified and astonished the people of the twentieth century. It was some time before it could be believed ; and now the means of this warfare must be abhorrent to every decent-minded American.

The facts presented to us, so close to the scene of war, are not hearsay evidence, but have been brought to us in London by weeping fugitives and by those who have suffered personal abuse, outrage, and insult. American women of the highest class have been stripped and insulted ; ladies have been put in prison ; and half that has been endured by defenceless women—British, French, and Russian subjects—will never be known.

This message is sent to the *New York Sun* from an American citizen.

Let me revert, in closing, to the opening of my letter. All German-Americans who have made their choice of a new nationality and a new fatherland, should, instead of endeavouring to palliate the Kaiser's mode of warfare, denounce it with the people of the United States.

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

To Mrs. John Van Vorst, Paris.

LONDON, August 27th, 1914.

Please try, before the Channel is closed, to send me over all the news you can. Think what it will be, cut off from France ! Or rather, don't think ; because what's the use ?

. . . I still have three more Red Cross lectures before getting the final certificate. The instruction has been extremely interesting and I have enjoyed the study. You would have laughed at the little messenger boys upon the operating tables, and all the old maids bandaging their legs and arms. I am too Parisian not to see the humour of it. They tell me at the head office that England will be made one vast hospital and that the Red Cross has orders to receive all the Continental wounded. Can this be possible ? If so, and I remain here, even my inefficiency may be of some use. . . .

Of course, this city is full of interest, if only one's mind could leave the horrors, and the strain could, for a little while, be loosened.

As for the country about Mother's house, it is divine. You never saw such fields, and the grazing sheep, and the tiny little town with its unbelievably picturesque houses ; and Mother sits in a rough-and-tumble old garden, which for

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

some reason or other is not even dreary ; and the odour of the hay and the fields and the flocks is intoxicatingly sweet, and the view charming ; and the afternoons that I have sat there . . . have been peculiarly satisfying and peaceful. I have enjoyed every moment of them. . . .

You can't think what primitive goings-on there are right here in Mayfair, nor can you believe that they take place in the twentieth century. For instance, the barrel organ, of course, and individual women and men singing solos of all kinds ; a man playing military tunes on a pipe, particularly pathetic when he plays " The Flowers o' the Forest are all wi'ed awa'." And the other day, the oldest, oldest-fashioned " Punch and Judy " ! It must have dated from long before Dickens' time. Then a woman with a cart full of parrots and birds, and a monkey and kittens for sale. And as for the signs on some of the buildings, they cause a smile even in these thoughtful days. " Self-contained maisonnette," for instance—if you can tell me what that means ! If a Zeppelin drops a bomb here, even the British " maisonnette " will not be self-contained ! Another sign is a very common one : " You may telephone here, if so desired." Think of the politeness of that to a busy public ! Then another : " Trams stop here if requested." And the names of some of the

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

little inns, as you pass them beyond Elstree : "The Country Lad," for instance, in pink stucco, one storey high, with bright green blinds, and the August fields around it ; and all along up the hill, the endless files of dusty soldiers tramping away, past the farm lad and the country boy and the harvests. . . .

Aug. 27th, 1914.

. . . I was deeply interested in your views about the theatre of war. I think that Slav power could not be more hideous than the German power. No atrocities, excepting those of the Dark Ages, have equalled the barbarism of the Germans to their fellow-creatures. And I also think that Germany is more materialistic than Russia, and that is the secret of it all. . . .

To Mrs. F. B. Van Vorst, New York.

Sept. 19th, 1914.

MY DEAR MARY,

It is amusing to read that the German Emperor says that if the extinction of the German Empire is threatened, he will arm every child and cat and dog in the kingdom for revenge. He has already, apparently, armed every maniac and vandal, every criminal and drunkard, and set

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

them loose upon the highest civilisation that we know.

In the German appeal for sympathy to the United States, let Germany not forget the rôle that women play in our country. There is no country in the world where their voice is clearer and where their force is greater. The atrocities practised upon women by the Germans in Belgium and in France call for a reckoning that Germany must pay until its last breath, and the women of our country will not be slow to display their attitude of mind towards German barbarism.

France knew the horrors of German invasion in 1870, but hoped for better things after the supposed civilising of forty years. Yet graver and more frightful horrors than inspired Guy de Maupassant to write of Mademoiselle Fifi in his immortal story have befallen the women of France, as well as the women of Belgium.

Germany must make no sentimental appeal to the people of the United States. We are bidden to remain neutral by our Government ; our hearts and souls cannot be this. Before a political situation, diplomacy might keep us silent ; but before rape and brutality such as the savage races employed ; before dishonour, arson and cowardice, before insult to priests, before murder of women, before fiendish attacks upon

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

those who minister to the sick, we are neither neutral nor silent. Nor will we ever be, and Germany may as well know it thoroughly.

To Miss B. S. Andrews, New York.

DEAREST BELLE,

I have been able to get letters carried by hand to Bessie, even at the worst moments—and the moments have been bad, I assure you! At one time we thought hourly that those dreadful devils would enter our beloved Paris. Nor are we sure yet that all is well. How can we be? . . .

There are interesting things besides the horrors, of course, and here in England we have only seen that side. London has been calm and peaceful, except for the exodus of her soldiers; and the weather, with the exception of one day, has been divine, so that it is hard to realise all that is going on about us.

You must not think of me as nursing wounded soldiers, for I have done nothing at all but hang around in a state of horrible desuetude, wishing myself in every quarter of the globe, and failing probably to appreciate just how thrilling it is on Piccadilly. I believe I have now secured at least the first diploma of the Red Cross. . . .

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

Just now we are waiting for the outcome of the battle of the Aisne and our hearts are filled with loathing of Germany's horrible atrocities; and we hope, with all our hearts, that she will be crushed into the most abject submission. Don't let us hear of any peace overtures from America, please. As Richard Harding Davis said when President Wilson suggested neutrality: "*He hasn't seen this war.*"

To Victor Morawetz, Esq.

LONDON, Sept. 3rd, 1914.

MY DEAR VICTOR,

. . . I have been wandering through the streets of London all alone, watching the movements and the character of this great city at this particular time of its history. Indeed you are right when you speak of the intense moment and its great importance. One can't be everywhere at once, and if France is horrible and quivering with interest, London is certainly throbbing with the same issues too. Its pulse is slow, but it is rising rapidly, and I think that by the time you have this letter it will have awakened more completely than the people themselves dream. It has been like watching a rising tide all these weeks. One of the most interesting

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

phases of it all has been the welding together and the blending of party and the annihilation of personal interest in the one great Cause.

I have been thinking, too—no doubt you have thought the same—that none of us have comprehended war at all. The Germans alone seem to have understood it. War is so essentially brutal that you can't combine it with reason or civilisation. Why make civilised war? It is uncivilised, and if you're going to make it at all, you may just as well do it to the limit. At any rate, this experience will prove whether there can be such a thing as "civilised warfare." If the Germans conquer, then to rush on like the Huns is certainly the way to fight; if they don't, we shall all probably decide to disarm. They have cut off the sword hands of the little children, so that they may not bear arms against them in the future.

It is soul-stirring indeed to be amongst these nations struggling for existence; but I assure you that if it's not your own people, and you can't take an active interest in what they are doing, it is real suffering to be useless, and the strain is great. For instance, I have worked for the Red Cross examinations, and now find that I can't be a British Red Crossist and must form part of a foreign legion if I want to be one at all.

You must think my ideas ridiculous, but still

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

I like to air them to you. If France is unsuccessful, don't you think it will prove that a republic surrounded by these powerful autocratic monarchies is not equal to coping with a martial situation? If Germany conquers, the march of civilisation will be retarded by many years—if anything *can* retard the march of civilisation.

It is strange to think that when you get this letter the fate of France will probably be decided—certainly the fate of Paris. I can no longer think of the personal equation in it, when I think of the dreadful human sacrifice going on so near.

Alice Carr Ellison told me just now of a friend of hers to whom the War Office sent news. To the officer who came and told her she said: "Is my husband badly wounded?" And he said: "He's dead." And she said, without showing the slightest emotion: "Thank God he's not among the missing!" That's the way she bore it; for to be among the "missing" now is like being among the savages.

I saw an Englishwoman to-day who had escaped from a German prison. She said that the German officers *trod* upon the people. They seem to have gone blood-mad. I suppose there is such a disease.

And yet, out of it all, I know there will rise some great spiritual conquest and good; and

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

everything will, out of this baptism of fire and blood, come purified. But the horror of the cauldron ! . . .

A friend of Marie Edgar's in the Hussars wrote her yesterday that he was in the Charleroi engagement, and walked ankle-deep in blood ; and the poor foreign legion from Africa was half exterminated.

I have taken a house for mother on the Edgware road, about six miles from London, and shall stay there till October, if I can. At least mother will, and if we are threatened with disaster such as is menacing France, why then I suppose I'll have to bring her to America.

You can't think how splendid Mr. Herrick has been. Really, I hope they'll make him President.

As ever,

M. V.

To Mrs. Victor Morawetz.

LONDON, Sept. 8th, 1914.

DEAREST VIOLET,

For the past few days there has been no violent engagement, and we have been able to draw a breath ; but it does not mean that we are watching any less keenly or praying any the less fervently.

The recruiting goes on beautifully and the

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

spirit of voluntary enlistment is very fine and must be highly gratifying.

You asked me to write you about the state of affairs ; but you see, one realises that in the ten days it takes to get a letter, the face of events must have changed enormously.

Elizabeth Grimm writes me : "Leave London immediately : Germany has terrible surprises in store for you. Eighty Zeppelins are going to fly over England and France ; and you must take mother to Rotterdam, where I will spend the winter with her." Poor mother ! Any further flight must be to America—nowhere else.

After passing five weeks in Red Cross study and lectures and examinations, we were informed the other day very curtly, that no foreigners would be allowed to become members of the British Red Cross. It was a bitter moment and I felt bitterly. A fine-looking Frenchwoman, who has been scrubbing the floors of the hospitals and so forth, in addition to the Red Cross work, has been asked to form a foreign legion, taking in the unwelcome French, Belgians, etc. To-day I sold my uniform, bought with such excitement and interest. The Foreign Legion will have the smartest uniform you ever saw.

I have just come in from a rifle brigade practice. It is really most gratifying to see the women's

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

enthusiasm here. To-day we were drilled by an officer from the Coldstream Guards. It certainly passes some of the time most agreeably, even if one is tired.

Yesterday I went down for the arrival of the Ostend train, to help the Belgian refugees from Malines and Louvain. One poor little woman arrived from Malines with her husband and her old uncle. "It is exterminated," she said to me; "we have nothing in the world but what we hold in our hands."

I went to see Arnold Bennett's play "The Great Adventure." I sat in the pit, and only the pit was occupied. It was one of those nervous nights when at every corner some new poster sent absolute horror to one's soul. And now, as I write, how little we know what the issue may be! Think what the devastation is at best in our fair French fields! I can't bear to think of it. . . .

Two friends of Mollie Andrews asked me to go out with them in a motor, and we lunched at Tunbridge Wells, getting back here at four o'clock. It was a divine and marvellous September day, and the air did me a great deal of good. Then I took my own taxi and motored out to dinner with Bridget Guinness at Windsor and spent a most delightful evening. Mr. Guinness mapped out the whole campaign on the floor with cards, and we raved

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

and raged together, and it was greatly satisfying. Mr. G. said it was a privilege to live in these times. It is a frightful privilege to be *here* ! The excitement and the suffering, the hope deferred and the faith it requires ; in the case of many, the bitter sacrifice, the unending agony. Just think what it means ! I read to-day of a woman who had four sons at the front, and of another who had lost her only son. Of course there are many like that. Women have been married on Monday and their husbands have left them the following day, and at the end of the week they have had telegrams from the War Office to tell them that they will never see again these men who have so gallantly gone to stand for France and Belgium—for that's what it means. England could have remained neutral, if it had not been for that eternal bond of brotherhood which, when it is felt, is the strongest thing on earth and the safeguard of nation and home.

I hear that Kitchener went to France for forty-eight hours. He drove in a motor as far along the French front as he could in that time, and during his stay there he organised the new military government of Paris, changed the old and sent the authorities to Bordeaux ; but that's not official, so don't tell it all over the place and get me in for something or other !

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

Maeterlinck is taboo now in Germany. Carpentier, the prize fighter, has given up contracts here amounting to thousands of pounds a week to go and fight for France; Marcoux, with his American contracts all bust to flinders, has taken his divine voice into the ranks to sing the "Marseillaise"; and Mordkin and Rachmaninoff are shouldering Russian weapons. Art and Science and Letters are all combining, filling these bloody fields with immortal sacrifices—oh, how thrilling it is! Yes, it's a thrilling time—a terrible time; but there is a sublimity in it of which our children will reap the glories. Cyril Maude is a special constable, and when the theatre is over "Grumpy" patrols the reservoirs, to prevent German spies from poisoning the water of London. *Quelles belles choses!*

I really think that I came very near having brain fever. I went through the worst horrors, in imagination, thinking of Paris, and Bessie, and the wreck and destruction. Just now it's holding one's breath, and in this moment of waiting, I close, dearest Violet, with the most devoted love.

M.

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

To Victor Morawetz, Esq.

LONDON, September 9th, 1914.

MY DEAR VICTOR,

I am extremely touched by your expressions of interest and sympathy, and I can so easily see you here, agitating for others and working for any cause in which you put your talent and your magnetism and your interest. Indeed, I am sure that if you were here, you would be fighting for France. . . .

They will not have me on the British Red Cross because I am an American and "neutral." I am sure you appreciate this disappointment. Still, I have two certificates to-day, having passed two examinations. There is another to-morrow, and I hope then to get the Red Cross certificate, though I can't be, as they say, "on the strength."

When you receive this, we shall all of us know what the Allies have been able to do. From the very best authority here I have it that four French Generals were shot for treachery at Namur. Fancy what it would have been if England had not gone to the rescue! Is it not picturesque—that response of the British armies of India and Canada, of the farmer boys from the cold North and the Indians, who are bringing their beautiful mounts with them? Wouldn't

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

you love to see that battlefield—since one there must be—or, if not the battlefield, the assembly ?

There has not been, since I came to England, one note of doubt as to the righteousness of the Cause.

One of Wanamaker's managers, Mr. Helmer, has just come through from Paris. He and a few others chartered a boat and came by the Seine to Rouen, their passage costing them fifty dollars apiece and their individual fees mounting to sixty dollars between Paris and Rouen. There their boat was taken away from them, mines being laid in the Seine and the bridges blown up. At Rouen, where they hoped to pass the night, they were told that the Germans might arrive any moment, and they toiled painfully on to Havre, where Mr. H. told me pandemonium reigned supreme. Thousands of American and English refugees were thronging the streets and the hotels, and the little steamer, supposed to accommodate five hundred people at the most, carried fifteen hundred over, crowded like sardines, and their baggage was left standing in the streets of Havre. Think of it ! He is a very quiet, unimpressible American business man, but I have seen no one more impressed and overwhelmed by the situation than he. I am a radiant optimist compared with him. He doesn't think it a possible thing for

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

the Germans to be conquered in France. He is anxious to return to Paris and do what he can for the people there. He gave me a picture of the deserted streets, of the closed hotels and shops, and congratulated me very warmly on the fact that I was not there and had made such an easy exit. It took one of the *Daily Mail* correspondents fifty hours to get from London to Paris. The risks of being confined there hermetically sealed, have been what has kept me from going back now—purely on account of mother; but it is hard to remain here, as you can imagine. . . .

I know you will be pleased at the notice in *Punch* of my book. Not much, perhaps, but it is a great honour to be spoken of in that paper, it seems. . . .

Four British Army nurses have been brought home shot.

No more for the present.

As ever,
M.

To Mrs. Victor Morawetz.

LONDON, Sept. 12th, 1914.

DEAREST VIOLET,

. . . I just want you to note what trouble I have taken to get letters to you and to others during this time, when people are left



PORTRAIT OF MRS. VICTOR MORAVETZ
From painting by Mrs. Albert Herter



WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

without news. I sent you letters by hand by three different people who were going over, and some gloves by a fourth person. I have sent Bessie letters by Richard Harding Davis, and it was amusing to see him pack them away in his bag with his passports and letters of introduction. And I have sent them over and over again by a courier. I only mention this to show what can be done if one cares. . . .

Mother moves into her other house on Tuesday, and I give up my rooms here. I have not yet decided whether I shall go out to Edgware and remain there with mother for a month, or whether I shall start away next week to see Bessie and Mme. de Sers. After all, it doesn't make much difference now, does it? as the Germans have not quite ruined France, and the Allies are successful. That's all that counts.

To-night the searchlights are being flashed from the London buildings, ready for the Zeppelins if they come; but nobody seems to be afraid of them any more.

I passed the third Red Cross examination yesterday. I look upon it now as only an added bit of knowledge, because we shall not be used; but I have enjoyed it.

Somehow, nothing seems the same any more, although I think that things will adjust themselves

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

all over this great troubled land ; because it seems as though a spirit was moving over everything that perhaps has never been there before. England was said to be degenerate. Surely, if there has been any degeneracy, an almighty upward movement has been brought about by this crisis. What a power she has been throughout her Empire ! We speak of the German system : What is it ? Within the confines of a single country, a forced, autocratic materialism. Whereas, as you see, this wide response of the British Empire from shore to shore, from these princes of—let us not say a conquered people,—from subject races, from colony and island, this mighty answer, this evidence of affection, this consolidation without compulsion, why, it seems to me that it is one of the finest things in history ; not to speak of the voluntary enlistment of what will be a million men ! . . . I believe that it all comes from a certain idealism ; also from the fact that if the proper Cause is present, the men and the means are there too. . . .

Madelon Hancock is determined to go to Antwerp—alone, by herself. . . . She has bought a nurse's costume, but what she will do in Antwerp, or how long she will be permitted to stay, I don't know. . . .

Devotedly,

M.

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

To Mrs. John Van Vorst, Paris.

LONDON, Sept, 12th, 1914.

DEAREST BESSIE,

It is a great comfort to be able to send in this manner, and if you will have a letter ready for this man, he will bring it back to me. . . .

The news is so glorious that we no longer have any fear. Of course you hear of the French, and we hear this marvellous English news of staunch and brilliant action; and I assure you that it's thrilling beyond words.

It is interesting in every way to be here—to see the unparalleled unity of this nation. What an Empire, isn't it? From shore to shore, what loyalty! Think! Five hundred thousand volunteers in a month—and all so willing to go! What a lesson to militarism, and how uplifting! No wonder they fight!

I hope you have received the papers that give you a picture of the Indian and Canadian response. Really it's picturesque, isn't it? I am sure you will be interested in the enclosed clippings.

I have an idea that I shall see you before very long. I think your courage has been superb and it must give you great satisfaction. . . .

Devotedly yours,

M.

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

To Mr. F. B. Van Vorst, New York.

LONDON, Sept. 22nd, 1914.

DEAR FREDERICK,

. . . We are not exciting enough, here in England, to be in danger, unless a possible visit of a Zeppelin may be called so ; but we are certainly palpitating with interest, extremely picturesque, and if one may judge of what is going on across the Channel, in the deeds of those magnificent bulldog regiments, we are superb and brave. I don't suppose in the annals of war anything has been more surprising than the vigour and the dogged continuance of this repulse. When you think that men have now, as I write, been fighting for ten days, one might almost say without respite, wearing, many of them, the same clothes in which they left England, without daring to take off their boots lest their poor feet should swell so that they couldn't put them on again, one can judge a little of the hardships of this modern war.

The scenes here are delightful and pathetic as well. You can't believe that, in the twentieth century, anything so amusing as this Highland costume could still exist, yet officers with bare knees and checkered stockings stand before the fireplace in hotels, smoking and talking as serenely as though, within thirty-six hours, they might not

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

be leading one of those mad charges up a French hill. They are fighting in trenches up to their waists in water now, and think what the fields around Paris must be! Those days when the Germans were within a few miles of the gates made one's heart sick, and even now we are not sure that they may not have another try, although it is not likely.

Journeys at this time are long and eventful. A correspondent of the *Daily Mail* travelled with a Turco whose trousers were all dripping with blood. "Are you badly hurt?" the *Daily Mail* man asked sympathetically; and the grinning nigger said: "Oh, no! Take this back to Africa," and he pulled out of his baggy trousers the dripping head of a German. Imagine the sensation in the railway train! An editor of the *Daily Mail* told me this himself at lunch the other day. . . . The trains, it seems, are full of vermin and the seats covered with filth and blood. They can't clean them out properly. And they say that overland travel from Paris southwards is full of disturbing and wearying adventures.

In Clarges Street, where I have been staying, much that is picturesque passes by the front door. An old man plays on a harp the songs that the boys are singing on the battlefield; and there is a most pathetic little Punch and

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

Judy man with a dog whose attractiveness would touch your heart. You can be sure that he does not go by without a reward.

. . . They say that the military Red Cross nurses are swishing around in great style in Paris, and that every one is mad to be a nurse!

It is hard to realise in this quiet England, serene in these September days, that the death struggle and the dreadful grip of war is going on only a few miles away, with such tremendous issues at stake. . . .

What do you think of the destruction of beautiful Rheims, where Jeanne d'Arc saw the king crowned? Mutable and immutable! And one asks one's self over and over again: "What lasts?" What indeed? And far up in Lorraine and Alsace they will answer: "Qui vive? La France quand-même!" And perhaps there are certain things that because of an inherent love and loyalty, in spite of disaster and far-flung battle lines and constant change, persist—quand-même. . . .

To Miss B. S. Andrews, New York.

EDGWARE, Sept. 28th, 1914.

DEAREST BELLE,

. . . I came down this morning in the train from Windsor with a young officer, not more

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

than twenty-two years of age—one of the most attractive-looking young men I ever saw—such a clean, fine face. He had just come back from the battle of the Aisne, where he was wounded. His arm was all done up in a big silk St. John's bandage. He said that he had been fighting for three weeks and had not had his clothes off once in that time, nor his boots, and that he had only once during that time seen the enemy. I am going to give you all this information *en bloc*, while I can remember what he said. It is the first personal note I have had of this vast, horrible war. . . . He said that the German organisation is beyond words superb, and that there never was such an army to meet, and that it is extraordinary that both the Allies and English have been able to stand up against it at all. He said that the German officer proper, of the best regiments, is courteous and considerate, and that when you realise that they have four or five million men all war-mad, to deal with, their job is not easy. He said they lay twenty-four hours in the trenches, in the wet and cold, soaked through, and that all the weaklings of his regiment were killed, for those that were not shot died from exhaustion and pneumonia. There were twenty-six officers in his regiment and only six came out alive. He was one of this little number. He had no idea

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

that he would ever see England again. His school pal, and an officer like himself, was by his side all through the engagement, and he turned to this boy and said : " Won't we have a jolly time when we get back to England ? " And just at that moment he was shot through the heart. This boy buried him after the battle, digging his grave and taking his cigarette case and things from his pocket. He said he would otherwise have been left there on that field, unburied, as they had no time even to drag out the wounded. He was finally hit by a shell—shoulder broken—then lay for thirty-six hours in a base hospital in a little French town, where the care was not very good. He said the whole town around them was reduced to powder and ashes, but the hospital was spared ; and that night they all escaped in Red Cross waggons, the searchlights of the enemy following them like the eyes of demons and shining upon their faces even at a distance of four miles. But the Germans did not shell the hospital waggon. He was piled in a cattle truck with other wounded men and made the return journey to England in that way as far as the Channel boat. Several of his personal friends died on that dreadful trip.

When you see the flower of England sacrificed like this, it seems too bad, doesn't it ? And all

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

for what? He said that he thought they wouldn't get the Germans out of France before Christmas.

My cousins in Brussels are cut off from all the rest of the world. My cousin writes me that his wife is more distant from him than if she were in Calcutta or New York, although he can see Brussels from the forts of Antwerp. He is there with the King, and she is doing ambulance work in her own city. Brave, isn't it—wonderfully brave?

I wish you could see the arms of light that flash across these skies here at night now—great long fans of radiance, searching for Zeppelins, though what they'd do when they found them, God knows!

We hear that Kreisler is wounded. No one is spared.

To Mrs. Morawetz.

PARIS, Oct. 3rd, 1914.

DEAREST VIOLET,

I left London on a divinely beautiful day, cloudless and balmy. The train and boat from England were crowded with people who were venturing like timid rats out of their holes back, as they hoped, to a secure city. The Channel crossing took six hours and was very good. As I

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

had on my uniform I passed in pounds and pounds of tea and cigarettes for the British wounded, friends of English friends. There was a big contingent of Red Cross nurses on the boat, going to Limoges, and I gave the Chief a letter to the dear Havilands. Every one talked to every one else with the most good-natured friendliness.

The late September sunlight was red around the shores of old Dieppe as we drew in. I do not know quite what changed aspect I had looked for, but there was no change. France is always beautiful and seemed more beautiful than ever now. The men who had not gone to the war were younger and more sturdy than we had expected to see.

As soon as we pulled into the first station, seven wounded soldiers were hurried in and took their places in a vacant compartment next to us, shared with them by the head woman from Worth's and a pretty little fitter. Picture the colour of this—the men in their dirty red and blue uniforms, and the pimpante little dressmakers sharing their luncheon with their wounded brothers and chattering with them like devoted, gay little birds.

The men were talkative, and told of the days and nights in the trenches, and the history of their wounds, as they will tell their brave stories until

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

they are old men. One had had his eye shot out—such a delicate-looking young fellow ; another's wound was in his back, and there were three holes in his coat where the bullets had only grazed him.

One young man said that as his companions and he lay under cover their hiding place was betrayed by a seventeen-year-old French girl in the neighbouring village. The Prussians menaced her with death, and to save her life she sold her people. When you think what they have done to the women and children, it is hard to judge her. Fortunately, this special little band was able to cope with its pursuers.

On the Channel boat there was an American woman who had come from Dinant, where she had seen the arrival of countless refugees from Belgium who had walked to Dinant on foot ; so these incidents come from her who saw the people, to me, who repeat them to you.

She saw four or five little boys with their hands cut off at the wrist by the Prussian soldiers. She saw a woman who had lost her mind because her sister and her sister's children had been put to death by the sword before, her very eyes in the little inn where the woman had given the soldiers nourishment and lodgings.

But I am sure that you have heard enough of

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

these never-ending atrocities—France is full of them and Belgium encore !

There was nobody to meet me at the station when I arrived in Paris, and the desolation of Paris soon began to assert itself. The streets were scarcely lit anywhere. However, nothing could spoil the return. The weather being mild, the apartment was comfortable, and in a few moments everything necessary was put in order and after the London lodgings and the exile, the sweetness of it was beyond any words to express—alone as I was. It seemed too good to be true, that this beloved little place had really been spared to me a little longer.

Below in the concierge's lodge, huddled in a chair, sat the lodger over me—a little old gentleman who lives quietly here and whom nothing would induce to leave Paris. He had had his instructions from the proprietor to cover the roof of the apartment with heavy water-soaked mattresses in case of bombs, and he had taken all his most precious possessions downstairs on the first floor. It seems that the taubes flew low and circled for days over the *Chambre des Députés* and this little place, and God knows why they did not drop their fiendish loads. Only two days before a bomb had fallen in the *Rue de l'Université*, the street next to mine.

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

The following morning I went to the office of the *Matin* and learned that young Robert Le Roux had been shot at Toul in a recent engagement, and that the news was just as bad as it could be.

The following day, as there is absolutely nothing to do here, and I felt more than anxious to put into practice some of my new-found skill, I went to the American Ambulance at Neuilly.

I wish you could have seen this picture, could touch the excitement and the vividness of life that come at such a time as this. In June mother and I drove past a beautiful-looking new building in the style of François Premier, and wondered what it was ; if we could only have seen just then the picture I was to see next time I approached that building. It was the Pasteur Institute, incomplete, and now so replete. Paris has given it over to Mrs. Vanderbilt, and before each window hang the luminous dark blue curtains to shade the light from the invalided eyes.

In front of the place was a constant *va-et-vient* of Red Cross motor ambulances. As I went in two of these were arriving from the trains, and I saw five blue-coated, red-trousered soldiers carried in.

The corridors are full of the house surgeons and orderlies—men who have volunteered their

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

services, mostly American, some English. There were artists from the Latin Quarter and young clerks from the shops, all busy in the service of this country which has given its treasures to us all for so many years.

I saw Mrs. Vanderbilt shortly after, and offered my services, which she was so good as to accept immediately. I also promised to bring her Miss Arkwright, who is to arrive to-day from London, and Glory Hancock for whom I have telegraphed to Antwerp.

In one of the big rooms where I worked yesterday some fifty women are engaged preparing the bandages. That sounds like nothing, does it not? It is one of the most important things in the hospital, and a never-ceasing occupation. I wish you could see that room. The workers are ladies almost all of them, and many of them are strikingly beautiful, with that distinction and grace that the American woman possesses to such a marked extent. There has been no effort at putting them all into a regulation uniform—down here, in the bandage room, at any rate—and some of them have come from their homes and wear their own pretty blouses and their high-heeled slippers and their ear-rings, the rest being enveloped in the all-concealing apron. Many are in the full uniform of the hospital, that is in snow-

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

white, with red crosses on their breasts and a little coif on their heads, medieval in its effect, and under their hands and round about them all are yards upon yards, and piles upon piles of the fine snowy material that is to go out from here to its ghastly yet merciful usage.

Here I worked yesterday all day long, and from here I shall be called shortly, when needed, to go upstairs into the wards.

Here I saw the English Chaplain, with his Doctor of Divinity cap on his head—another picturesque figure—and he told me that the mortality was something frightful, that the American hospital asked for the worst cases, and got them with a vengeance. He looked worn and troubled ; he has been at so many deathbeds of brave British officers torn suddenly from peaceful England, from their sports and from their home occupations, to spill their blood on this foreign shore, almost without warning, scarcely knowing why, and their people certainly not knowing where they had fallen. In many cases no communication has been made with their friends until they have gone for ever.

In my lodging house in London I took an interest in Mrs. B., whose young husband, Capt. B., in the Coldstream Guards, was aide-de-camp to the General. He died on the 14th September, alone,

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

in a barn—quite alone—shot through the intestines. She never knew until the end of the month that he was even wounded.

I went upstairs yesterday to talk with a young lieutenant of the same regiment—such a nice boy. I really do not think he was more than 19, and he looked like a child. He sat there in the dressing-gown that some American gentleman had given him, his brown hands clasped so meekly—such a charming, gentle chap. I tell you, it makes your heart sick when you think of the flower of English manhood, with all its promise, being mown down by those barbarians to whom honour is only a word, and in whose souls, so far, we have not seen one glimmer of spirituality or grace.

A woman I know here had her house rifled, and what was left desecrated by the Crown Prince and his officers. He packed up boxes full of her treasures, had them marked with the Red Cross, to ensure their respect by the Allied armies, and shipped them to Germany—a robber who should have been a prince, a murderer who should have been a knight.

Best love,
M.

DEAR MOLLIE,

I lunched yesterday with a Député and with one of the chiefs of the Military Red Cross

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

here. The latter was one of the big French doctors, a man who has had charge of field ambulances, and he said that whilst he was tending the wounded on the field near Paris a German officer with two others, came up to him, when his hands were busy with bandages, and, with his pistol at the doctor's breast, demanded his watch and his portemonnaie, all of which, of course, were handed over. "I gave up my belongings," said the doctor, "and they turned and walked off together. Strangely enough, they had not sufficiently protected themselves, for a man whom I was tending—a wounded officer—still had his pistol. I tore it out of its case, and I shot all three in the back as they walked away." No doubt he would be blamed by those whose codes are against shooting men in the back, but I do not think you will blame him, will you?

But to the stories and pictures of this war there is absolutely no end.

La Rue's, the restaurant, is full of generals and their staffs, newspaper correspondents (there won't be many left, though, presently, for they are all being sent away), Red Cross nurses, and the drifting few who have remained and those who are merely passing through.

After my work last night I walked all the way home from the Porte Maillot, and stopped on the way at the Astoria, where the Red Cross is in full

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

swing. There, sitting on a chair in the corridor, I found a woman weeping, and it was poor little L., our slipper woman. She had come to deliver a pair of slippers for the head nurse. She said to me: "Oh, Mademoiselle, for the love of Heaven, give me something to do—anything, wash floors, or scrub—something to take me out of the Rue Cambon and my shop so that I may forget those fields and that dreadful distance where my son is. I know nothing of him, I have heard nothing of him, and I cannot go on making slippers for the Americans and for my clients; I want to change my ideas." I shall certainly try to do something for the woman, even if I only bring her to my house and let her sit and sew in my parlour, so as to comfort her if I can.

Devotedly,
MARIE.

To Miss B. S. Andrews, New York.

DEAREST BELLE,

Amongst the parcels given me to bring from London was a pair of field glasses sent to a little subaltern, for field glasses are almost impossible to buy now, as there are none left in Paris; and one of the girls who had laden me down with messages offered to pay my way around Paris for the delivery of these things, thinking that cabs

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

would be rare. So I took a carriage and devoted the entire day to these little commissions. The man I used to employ has gone to the war ; forty horses have been taken from that stable and only two left, and I had one of those two—a broken-down old black thing—driven by a man on the pleasant side of sixty, I should say.

After clattering around for some time, I found a little old pharmacien and his little old wife, far down on the Boulevard du Temple, sitting over their *soup au choux* at mid-day. They had both been weeping, and when I knocked at the door, they started up in, I think, alarm lest it might be one of those dreaded announcements : “ Tué à l’ennemie.” They were so old both of them, their voices were well-nigh gone. They looked such pitiable objects of humanity, everything worn away by the years but their power of suffering, and their love. Over my shoulder was slung the pair of field-glasses sent by the daughter—a French maid to Lady C. in London—to her brother on the field, and I could hardly give them without tears. I do not think I did. I had only seen the maid once, she was nothing to me, and when she asked me to carry those field glasses it was one more packet where I had already so many. They were always in the way when I wanted to unbutton my coat and get out my purse,

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

and bothered me on the whole journey, but when I took them off and handed them to the parents, and saw their delight, and gave them the message from London, well, I have not done one little thing which has given me so much pleasure in a long while.

After that, Webb and I drove through the *Marché du Temple*, and I bought all the vegetables for the soup and our luncheon myself, and the whole luncheon that day only cost me a franc. I cooked it myself, and it showed me how much money is continually wasted on food.

Upstairs, in the office of the *Matin*, I stood with Le Roux's secretary before a big military map on Robert's desk, and saw how he had followed day by day and week by week the campaign of that soldier son, marking with blue pencil from Paris north to Toul; and I saw the big ring around Toul, and the letters by the side of that map, ranged so carefully, to his father; and the letters on the other side, ranged so carefully, day by day, to his sister, and day by day to the young girl whom he should have married the night before he left for the front—and my heart ached. It all seems such a cruel, dreadful waste, although out of it heroes will rise, and new events and new destinies will make new powers, and the new "couche" will be better than the old—with what blood and tears the flowers are watered; and I thought

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

of Robert hurrying down over those encumbered roads, with his breaking heart, for he certainly loved his children most deeply.

How profound and touching everything is in these days !

It is full moon again, and it rises over these grey roofs and over these lovely trees with the same tranquil beauty as before. They do not light the clock in the *Chambre des Députés*, the hours are no longer luminous—one might say ; everywhere and everything seems to be watching and waiting—but the clock speaks just the same and marks the hours. . . .

When you think that what I saw yesterday was only the picture of one afternoon in one military hospital, it makes you shudder to imagine the anguish that is spread over four countries at this present moment.

When I went in yesterday, taking with me Miss Arkwright, a nurse from Guy's Hospital, London, to Mrs. Vanderbilt, I found that she had picked me out of the bandage room (probably because I made such poor bandages), and appointed me to Ward 69. I assure you, when I heard then that I was actually going into a hospital ward for the first time in my life, you could have bought me for twenty-five centimes. I have

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

always gone past surgical wards with my eyes straight in front of me, but when Mrs. V. fixed me with her serene look, I did not dare to flinch. Why should I? I had come for work. As we walked through those interminable halls together, she said calmly, "It is the worst ward in the hospital; you have had some experience, haven't you?" And I said, "Only home nursing, but I am not afraid;" and, singularly enough, I was not. It was up to me, and I would not have flinched for anything in the world.

When the door opened on Ward 69 you could have cut the atmosphere of that room with a knife! Never, never have you dreamed of such an odour! There were only seven men in that room, and five women nurses. "Pretty good average," you would say. Well, from the moment I entered that room at two o'clock until I left it at seven, not one of us had sat down once.

I was presented to the head nurse—such an angel! A Canadian, of course—I am crazy about Canadians, men and women; there is something superb about them. Then another London nurse, a French-Canadian, and an exquisite little French lady, not more than sixteen—think of it—a little sweet, angel-faced aide, and myself.

Well, these were the patients:

A Welsh boy, a handsome young fellow, with

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

double fracture and leg showing signs of gangrene ; a Frenchman over in one corner, whose trouble I do not know ; a nigger from South Africa with shell wounds and doing fairly well. He had not spoken one word since he entered the hospital the week before ; his poor little barbaric language could not be understood by any one near. Then a pitiful object, to whom I was asked to give sips of water, boasting of not less than five wounds in his legs ; another riddled with bullets and a fractured arm and leg ; and a lieutenant from Lyons the colour of an orange, his leg amputated in the middle of the thigh. Almost as soon as I entered the room he asked me if I was French, and I told him that I was a Parisienne just to comfort him. And lastly, Thomas, to whom we owed all the discomfort of our ward. The whole of his left side was gangrened, and he had been there a week in that putrid, dreadful state—and those women bore it without a word. During the day he said to me in his muffled voice : “ I lies here, trying not to give no trouble ; I don’t call no one, so as not to disturb these ladies ; sometimes I think I am too good.” This, of course, was said at intervals, and, he added, looking at the head nurse with positive adoration, “ I jes’ loves my nurses.”

The ward was beautifully fitted, of course, yet—it seems hard to believe—there was not

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

enough of anything, even of scissors or alcohol, and there was only one pair of gloves for that infected room. I am going to take a supply to-day, if they can be bought in Paris. One of the nurses had a newly-made cut on her arm ; she was impervious to the danger. " You must be careful," I said, and bound up her arm for her ; and she smiled and responded : " Careful in this room ? "—as much to say, it is fate if it goes wrong.

I think Mrs. Vanderbilt put me in there to see what I could stand, or how soon she could get rid of me. Naturally, I might have done a great deal more than I did, if it had been even a second day, but, to my tremendous surprise, I found myself able to bear a very great deal. I assisted at two of the dressings without feeling the slightest atom of nausea, and carried away pile after pile of that loathsome, infected linen ; but I will not go into further details, for what is the use ?

I also bandaged one of the men's legs, and I could not sleep last night for fear my first dressing might have slipped. Heavens ! if I should have done any harm.

Every little service paid so richly. Oh, you would never dream that such courage could exist, never ! Several times I felt, not like fainting, but like weeping my heart out.

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

We had Dr. Blake in there, four or five American doctors, and two big Frenchmen ; and, naturally, it was terribly interesting, only one must get over the last little remnant of delicacy, and have one's nerves and stomach well screwed down. One of the big French doctors made successfully six capital wound washings and dressings ; then he sat down. His face was a study. I said to him, "This is my *début*," and he looked at me with a strange smile. "I congratulate you," he said, "it is a strong beginning."

Nothing affected the smell in that room, and all the way home last night, down to the Palais Bourbon, I wondered what had happened to Paris, for I could not get it out of my nostrils. One of the young American doctors, however—who deserves a decoration—brought in a whole staff of men, and moved poor Thomas out of the ward, upstairs, to a room by himself, where he ought to have been long ago.

Those head nurses have had no relief, I don't know for how long. What is needed here is—more first-class women. There are lots of helpers, but the big women are needed. Nowhere in history have such wounds been seen as the Germans inflict, and this, remember, is only one corner of one hospital in this stricken city, and there are all the provinces, and London, and

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

Belgium, and Russia, and Germany ! Heavens ! it makes your brain reel.

One touching little incident : when the doctor was dressing one of the worst cases, and the man was screaming terribly (that, I assure you, was hard to bear), the Welsh boy leaned over, took his glass of lemonade, and handed it to me with such an appealing look : " Give him this," he said, as one hurt child might to another ; he could not bear those cries, they were worse than battle.

My maid came in to me the other day and said, with a smile of positive joy, " Isn't it perfectly lovely, Miss, another son of the ' Kayser ' has been killed." I have not seen a woman who would not tear the War Lord to pieces with her own hands, and I could begin it with joy. All I regret is, that I cannot really throw myself into that work up there, and serve and help as those women do. I never could ; it is not in me to love it, and I think that the profession of a trained nurse is one of the noblest, most superb sacrifices that there is. There is a whole hospital here on the Champs Elysées where there are nothing but women doctors and surgeons and girl scouts and nurses. I must say I am glad it is the men who are sick, and not the women. I wish we could have one or two of those nurses from the American ship that has just come over.

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

I am wondering if, perhaps, when I get back this afternoon, they will not have taken me out of that ward and set me to making tea or counting linen, and after they have found that I am good-for-nothing-at-all anywhere, then I shall disappear.

Mrs. H. C. Van Vorst.

AMERICAN AMBULANCE,
NEUILLY, PARIS, Oct. 15th.

DEAREST MOTHER,

Day after day goes by in such rapid succession now that one loses the sense of time as never before, and I am glad that I jotted down some first impressions, because to me, as to others, they will soon be old stories, taking their place in the routine of life and losing the clear-cut brilliance of novelty.

I was taken from my infected ward by Mrs. Vanderbilt to another, and although I must confess my heart ached to leave those women with whom I had already begun to fraternise, I felt in a way that it was God's mercy that I got out as I did. I speak of "fraternising" with the nurses; the faces of all those who had begun already to look upon me as a friend will be written for years in my mind as their eyes followed me to the door. I held back and said to Mrs. Vanderbilt, "Oh, please leave me here;" but she was determined.

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

I found myself in Ward 63, as aide to the head nurse—in the chic room of the hospital. Oh, Heavens ! what a difference, at the other end of the wing and a whole corridor away. There the atmosphere was almost Paradise. There were four English officers and three French—high-class men, two of them just about going away—lucky dogs ! I won't go into details of those snobbish, agreeable little wards, where all the ladies come, and where superb fruit and flowers are in sight all the time.

My head nurse is a delicious little person, a trained nurse for thirty-three years—think of it !—and capability itself ; she is very sweet to me. Mrs. Austin is with her in the morning, and I come on from two to seven.

I will just give you the salient points :

Captain K. is a handsome young man, soft and gentle of speech. He thinks I am a subordinate—I do not know why—and treats me *de haut en bas* in a way that would make any spoilt American woman's blood boil, but it just amuses me to death.

Next to him is a gentle lamb of a French boy, about thirty. I wish you could see him, with his tanned face and his eager eyes ; he was shot through the shoulder and arms, and all he cares for at all is to brush his teeth about forty times every second and be clean ! There you go for dirty

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

Frenchmen, and he was as clean as a sheaf of wheat on a bright summer's day !

During the day I got interested in a young lieutenant from Guernsey, who had gone through a severe attack of appendicitis on the field and been carried off. When I took my leave that night, the head nurse said that the boy was to be operated on in the morning.

I had never seen an operation, and if you will remember the state I was in last winter at the idea of their cutting you up, you can guess how the whole thing affects me ; but as I returned home last evening I determined that, cost what it would, I was going to stand by that boy for his own sake and for the sake of the people in Guernsey who do not know where he is.

Although my duties do not begin till two, I was at the hospital at eight in the morning, and asked Dr. Blake as he came in if I could assist at the operation on Lieutenant C.

On my arrival in my ward, I saw Lieut. C. being pushed out on the rolling chair, accompanied by an orderly. At first we went into the big antechamber. (Everything at the hospital here is on a large scale and perfectly appointed.) . . . I talked to him about all kinds of things, and went out for a second to get him a blanket. As I did so, the doctor of my old infected ward was speaking

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

to one of the surgeons in the corridor. "Can't you operate on him at once?" I heard him ask. "It is hemorrhage, and he cannot last if you don't." Then they rolled in poor Charlie Hern, the boy from my first ward—the Welshman who wanted to give his lemonade to his friend. It was horrible, that is the only word for it. In four days he had gone down to death. His condition was so appalling that I am not going to describe it to you, and I did not dare to approach him as he was one mass of infection, and my boy by whom I stood was so clean; but I smiled at Charlie, and he looked at me and knew me, and I felt as I went into the next room by the side of C. that I was deserting a ship going down in the storm.

It took a long while to get the young lieutenant under the influence of an anæsthetic, he was so strong and so normal. Without the slightest feeling of emotion other than interest, I watched Dr. Blake operate from beginning to end. Right out of a clear sky as one might walk in from the street, with no preparation, I saw the whole thing! It was a very bad operation, as the appendix lay well up under the peritoneum. There were seven doctors watching Dr. Blake, who is a perfect marvel, and, as we stood there, Charlie Hern's frail barque had touched the Port, and when we came out again they had taken him away.

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

That afternoon one of our empty beds was filled by a Marine Commandant—a man of sixty, who had one foot amputated and the other leg shot, so you can imagine his condition, if you like. Whilst they dressed his amputated foot he held both my hands in his big grip, trying not to scream aloud.

Well, I can stand it, I have proved that ; and I must tell you that there is a great fascination in it all. There are interminable walks from my ward to the far kitchen, walks that take me through both the principal wards in which there are at least two hundred patients. Even those walks have become a sort of distraction—think of it ! One of the nurses wears a pedometer, and yesterday she found that she had walked twenty kilometers during the day.

Now I want to speak of Vera Arkwright, who replaced me in the gangrene ward. She is perfectly beautiful, full of sympathy and sweetness, and a warm friend of Bridget Guinness. I got her into the hospital with a vague feeling that she was simply going to flirt with the officers and perhaps make me regret. Well, well ! Vera has been in that ward now from eight in the morning until half past-six every night. I wish you could see her—with crimson cheeks and a floating veil, carrying the vilest of linen and oilcloth—not to

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

throw away, but to wash it herself with a scrubbing brush. She has a keen sense of humour, and even amid the horrors it shines forth.

Yesterday she was heartbroken over Hern, and told me that the bullet in one of his wounds had severed a vein, and when she came in on duty this terrible hemorrhage had flooded the bed and the floor, and it was she who cleaned all that up. Yes, and she gathered up his little treasures to save for his people, and going into the linen room, from under all the filthy bandages extracted the poor little tin cigarette case which had been thrown out as rubbish.

Last night, at half-past ten, my bell rang, and poor Vera blew in asking for a morsel of food, as when she came out from duty every restaurant in Paris was shut. So my maid and I fed her up and sent her home. She certainly is a brick, and Glory Hancock, if she comes, will be another.

Don't think for a moment that this same thing is not going on everywhere ; only not everybody has time to make pictures of it.

In one of the big wards there is a little Spahi from Morocco, black as coal. He has a bayonet wound and cannot live. He wants some of his own Morocco food and what it is, God knows, but, of course, he cannot explain, and the sweet little girl who is taking care of him told me that he is

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

just as cross as he can be, and waves her away every time she comes near with his black hands, saying: "Pas ça, pas ça." He calls the head nurse, "Mamma," and will only eat when she feeds him.

One man told me that he lay wounded in the arm for two days, his companions on each side shot under his eyes; then, alone, he dragged himself across the field to the ambulance. He will never go back either to England or the field—his fields are farther on, and, God knows, dearly won!

Another has been twelve days in the trenches, with the dead and dying on every side.

Best love,
M.

To Miss Anna Lusk, New York.

DEAR ANNA,

The days will soon begin to repeat themselves, and I will continue to note, whilst they still have colour to me, various scenes in the hospital.

I am in my snobbish and select ward. Would you ever believe that I could make a good trained nurse? Never. Well, I am a bully trained nurse! You cannot hear me move about that ward—not a sound. I don't think I have dropped a thing since I went into the hospital, and I've

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

never forgotten anything, and I am sure that pedometer would have registered 17 kilometers on me to-day, for the head nurse doesn't mind sending me up and down those interminable stairs to that diet kitchen, and Heaven knows where not! with great big iron brocs full of hot and cold water, and I never show the slightest sign of having too much of the job. I can do all the tricks and stunts now pretty clearly, lift them up in bed, wash them and comb them, and, you know, I am a very good masseuse. The thing that has surprised me most of all is that it does not make me nervous or restless, and, honestly, not even very tired. I went on to-day at twelve and came off at 6.30, and, after a hot bath, here I am sitting, fresh as a daisy, except for my feet which are a little bit tired.

Thank God, there are convalescents in this ward, some going to England, some to recuperate at Versailles, and some back to the Front.

Into our ward three days ago was brought, oh, such a wonderful old man—a magnificent, rugged Commandant, K.C.B., pilot of the naval aeroplanes. Only four days ago he was rushing in his motor, with his young son, who was on the Staff, across these scarred and dreadful fields and roads. In the night they drove against some obstacle, their motor was overturned, and they were imprisoned

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

under it. The General came to his senses to find that he could not move and his son was groaning near him. In order to free himself to get to his boy, he tried to cut off his own foot, but failed, and lay waiting till morning, when he was found, and taken to the nearest ambulance where his foot was amputated ; and now he lies here maimed for ever, with his other leg fractured from thigh to ankle. Of course, his agony has been terrible. His greatest anxiety at first was that they should find his gold monocle which he had dropped when he was wounded, poor darling ! When they did find it, he looked so smart and so pathetic lying there ; and then his aides came in, and he gave them minute directions how to make the necessary arrangements in London, so that when he could stump about on his foot, and his leg got well, he could go on flying. Think of it ! His spirit had not lost its wings, at any rate. His son lay wounded in another hospital here, and he wanted news of him, and he was dead ! Well, yesterday, after they had dressed his dreadful wound, I saw the orderly tell him. The Commandant never said one single word, he just lay there, that monocle staring into the room. Then they left him alone. Is not human nature strange ? That virile officer who screamed when they dressed his leg, and clung to a woman's hands,

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

never turned a hair or wept a tear when they told him that his only boy lay dead ! He was too proud to show his grief in the hospital ward, surrounded by junior officers, and never will I forget the silhouette of that finely cut face—he looks a little like Nelson—and the high-piled bedclothes over that disfigured body. Well, his wife came presently. She had hurried from England to her mutilated husband and had just heard this crushing news. I put the screens around them ; I gave her the eternal cup of tea, and left them quiet and controlled. The English are certainly wonderful. That was yesterday ; in our presence he has not shed a tear.

I like him best of anybody in the ward—better even than my little blonde French officer, whom I massage with alcohol, and my appendicitis boy.

The Commandant said to me to-day, “ Are you ‘ Marie Van Vorst ’ ? ” and I said, “ Yes.” Then he said : “ I have read your books,” and that sounded strange ; but the strangest thing of all was when his wife came again and suggested fetching some little delicacy, he said very firmly, “ Never mind, my dear, I am in the hands of professionals, and I do not want any amateur affairs ; ” and he said to me very feelingly, “ Amateur nurses are all very well, but when you

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

have professional care like this it spoils you for anything else."

Now what can I say more ? Don't you think I have won my spurs ? I smiled feebly, and did not give myself away.

One can help in a thousand ways—and the men are so wonderful, the Americans there, who have given their services to do the most menial and dreadful offices for these men. You see bankers and men that you have seen in society, in their white uniforms, bending over the sick, running miles for the needful offices, and oh, so kind and so useful !

Over the sofa in my little study that I love so much is an enormous war map now, and its history will take its place with many other memories in this room ; and outside the windows are the English and French and Belgian flags.

I am prepared every day to be thrown out of my smart ward, and if I have to go back to that charnel house I hope that God will give me grace. Vera said to-day, " It is discouraging to work for people whom you know will all be dead in a week." You remember in the Roman games how the gladiators used to cry, " Ave Caesar, those who are about to die greet you." So those poor creatures seem to salute the country for which they have fought, and surely we can help them as they go.

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

My lieutenant with the amputated leg in the other ward has gone to-day. That is four out of that infected ward, and three nurses are sick in bed with violent fever from it. Yet Vera is going on like a house on fire at her job. The poor lieutenant died as she was feeding him, and that girl did all the solemn and dreadful offices for him. She is wonderful.

The other day I was lunching at La Rue's in my uniform, when a gentleman turned to me and asked: "Could you use ten ambulance automobiles?" Well, I have never seen the time yet when I could not use what was offered me. As we had been saying that very day, if the wounded could only be brought to us direct from the firing line, without this heart-rendering transportation in cattle trains, herded together, we might stand less chance of gangrene and save more lives. I said, "Of course I can use the ambulance motors, and if you will give them to me, with the drivers, and all in perfect order for the field I will guarantee their proper use."

I have been mad for an automobile for years, I have almost prayed for one. I certainly have wished for one on every haystack, but I didn't know that I was going to have ten, and I don't think I prayed for quite this kind.

Events and impressions crowd thick and fast

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

in these days, and if I don't write immediately the contour and the outline is lost.

I close with love,

MARIE.

To Miss B. Andrews, N.Y.

DEAREST BELLE,

One wonders if one has forgotten how to feel and how to suffer, because it seems strange to go on existing when on all sides the horror and the agony is so intense. To people living their normal and calm lives in countries as yet untouched by these cataclysms, the words "battle" and "death" have only the usual significance. They cannot, even remotely, suffer with us—or, I should say, with them, for I suppose that you will retort to me that they are not my own people. Even down here in the little coast countries, life goes on more or less as it did, and even London pursues the tenor of its way. Paris, too, is more normal, and yet within a few miles is all that conglomerate suffering, and that long-drawn-out horror.

You will forgive me if I speak of my own sex. Later on, I suppose, will be told more fully what they are doing in this war. They are wonderful—wonderful indeed, in every rank. The patience and the dignity of these French women at home,

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

of those who have their own *sous-le-feu*, as they call it, awakens a never-ending admiration. The quiet industry that continues without any apparent change, only the resigned faces and the sudden flashing of the eyes as you ask them: "Have you anyone at the firing line?" The question tells.

Then the women who are nursing the wounded everywhere, and yet, enormous as that response is, it is not great enough; the need, the call, is far reaching and tremendous. I have always thought well of the women, but never so well as I do now.

And those women of my own class, those who have not the scientific training, nothing but their natural aptitude and their beautiful tenderness, they are lessons indeed. You see them everywhere. Groups of nuns have come back to Paris now that banishment seems forgotten, and you see them in their pretty dresses in the streets going to take up their service, and at these sinister railroad stations, where they hover like ministering birds from one dreadful shed to another. And the women in their snow-white dresses, and their white coifs with the Red Cross; ladies and professionals ministering everywhere. I do not think you realise how truly they are risking their lives; many of them have been killed. The British

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

and the French Red Cross have quite a list of those shot upon the battlefield, intentionally and by accident ; others whom shells have killed at their duty ; others who have died of fever already—and yet the need is unmet and overwhelming. These English women of station and position are doing magnificent work, all of them.

Robert's brother-in-law has had 30,000 wounded this month pass under his hand—a thousand a day for a month—and while he was selecting from those maimed and ghastly files those who were to go on and those who were to remain behind, they came to tell him that his only son had fallen. He went on with his pitiful work, and then his wife and he together took the train for the distant battlefield, where his boy was buried. They disinterred him and the father put that poor body on some straw in a cart and drove with it eight miles, holding meanwhile his son's dead hand in his, and they buried him in a little country churchyard until after the war.

All day long before his station—Juvisy—these trains pass. They have been packed in them like sardines, with every kind of ghastly wound. When there are two million men fighting, within a hundred miles, on one side and three million on the other, there are a good many wounded

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

to be taken care of. Try to think a little of it as it stands, and not as you read about it in the papers. Then try to realise the way the women feel over here, and also try to realise that, when you are told they are nursing the wounded, they are not doing it from any motive but one of human tenderness—to impute to them anything else is singularly obtuse, to say nothing else.

I can understand how one must be "fed up" with the war when one is of none of the countries that are fighting, and that the same vivid interest cannot be taken in it; but what is one to write about from over here? You see, the shops are closed, there is no commerce; every woman you see has all she loves either directly affected by this tragedy or else at the Front; therefore life is not normal with us. So you must try to understand the pitch at which we are living, and if we seem egoists in the way we suffer for the convulsed nations, you must forgive. You see, we cannot grasp American interests either now, it takes so long to get news and the papers have none.

There are beautiful things to see here. In the first place, the weather continues to be divine, summer-like, and exquisite, and there are picturesque groups everywhere. Of the flowers there are chrysanthemums of varied and sombre hue, and there is a quantity of fruit in the streets, and

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

the colours are rich and delicious. And there are constant processions of military funerals—poor and rich alike, burying their glorious dead.

Yours always,
M.

Mrs. H. C. Van Vorst, Edgware, England.

Oct. 15.

MY DEAR MOTHER,

I wish I had the power to describe the Aubervilliers Station as I saw it to-day. I went with the American ambulances early in the morning through the crowded Paris streets to this big station, where they select from the trains of wounded those who are to come to Paris. The station, some few miles from the city, is fenced off and guarded by Reservists in red trousers and blue coats. Here are a corps of military doctors who receive the long lines of trains from the north bringing in their ghastly loads, and these loads are ghastly enough, God knows! Only the desperate cases are taken out, those whom a few miles more would finish for ever.

We run our ambulance into line and climb down into the courtyard full of slightly wounded men waiting to be transported to other parts of

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

France. Along the platforms are ranged a row of neat tents—two of them booty taken from the Germans. One is a little operating-room, another a dressing-room, the third a kitchen with quantities of good things. Then there is a tent for the dead, one for the dying, and one for those who are to be given a few hours of repose before being sent on to the provinces, and in front of those mobile houses, waiting for the trains, are the women nurses—knitting, reading, resting, quiet and dignified, and with that look that all women wear here now—of patience and strength.

Among those little groups of wounded are several whose good fortune it is to be Parisian, and who have been permitted to see their wives and families. I saw one of these meetings. She came hurrying along, a little woman of the people, with her market basket on her arm, breathless, eager, and her husband whom she had not seen since the beginning of the war stood waiting for her. He had only a slight injury. She flew to his arms and he was able to embrace her and lead her away.

In the big station itself all picturesqueness is lost. There is nothing but odour, flies, mosquitoes, and crowds upon crowds of beds.

The room apart is in semi-darkness, and there must be 250 beds there, and all full. There are

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

wounded Turcos from Algeria, there are black Soudanese from the peaceful sands of the Upper Nile, there are Frenchmen, there are English. They wear still the field bandages, put on in some cases by Red Cross First Aides under fire. We want some of these badly wounded men, and we say so, and we get two of them—shattered, maimed, half-conscious. They are carried into our khaki covered ambulance and carefully placed on the stretchers, and we are off with them over the road we travelled before—this time at a reduced speed ; back again through Paris, and beyond the gates.

Yesterday I went to a very long and trying operation, and the little soldier who underwent it was so thin and small that I could almost have lifted him from the stretcher to the operating table without any help. A woman doctor gave the anæsthetic, a fine Brooklyn woman.

You will be interested to know that my Commandant has gone to England. I helped to put him in the ambulance to-day that drives him to Rouen. I wish you could have seen him lying there, so dignified and patient, with his naval cap jauntily on his head, his single eyeglass in his eye, and those poor helpless limbs ! He came to France alert, agile, full of manly interest and

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

power, with his son, a member of the General Staff ; and he goes back to England a cripple for life and his son a glorious name, that is all !

Bessie's experiences at Toul have been interesting. Twenty-five days she was there, in a tiny country hotel, the only civilian woman in the place—permitted to remain solely because she was so gentle and unassuming ; hidden in the different rooms, when the police made their visits, by the landlady, who adored her. There was neither butter nor milk ; the food was almost uneatable ; she went to bed in her clothes ; she knitted fifteen mufflers, over twenty yards of woollen goods, and learned the Bible by heart in chapters. She had no books, could write and receive no letters ; could not go to the hospital to visit the sick ; and the wounded came in like a crimson flood from the trenches—thousands upon thousands, a pitiful spectacle in that fourteenth century town. And the beautiful little medieval church in the shadow of the October evening at Vespers—one half of the church filled with soldiers, the other with the villagers, most of them mourning for their dead ; and without, the birds, brushing their wings against the old window-panes ; and the tolling of the mellow bell, and the elevation of the Host in the misty light at the altar above those heads, many of

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

them to be bowed so shortly in an eternal submission.

She only saw Robert for an hour at lunch time. During those weeks he slept in a cellar on bags containing apples and pears, with his son's leaden coffin by his side. He had been obliged to order it the first day he came to Toul, and slept beside it all the time. Think of that ghastly experience ! And toward the end the boy asked his father to read him fairy tales, and only to read the ones that ended happily ; so, hour after hour, he told him children's stories without end. He says that his son never spoke of France once until his last day on earth ; then he turned to his father and said : " Elle est plus grande, la France ? " And then " Combien de mètres carrés ? "—meaning how many feet have the soldiers gained—and closed his life saying : " Elle est plus grande."

Robert Le Roux, jun., made a brave and beautiful military career. He had charge of a regiment and led his men up a slope. The contingent knew before they started that they had been sent out to deceive the enemy and that their charge meant death. It was as heroic an effort as could be conceived. They had to go up the hill on their bellies, dragging their guns, and when young R. saw that they hesitated to advance, he stood up

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

in the full fire and told his men that if they did not advance he would go up on foot—which meant to certain and immediate death. Then they moved, and he shook them by the shoulders and called to them, encouraging them to go on. He was shot whilst giving a glass of water to his Commander, who was mortally wounded, and he lay on the field for hours. One of his soldiers, who had been a rascally fellow and difficult to deal with, came crawling up to him and tried to drag his superior officer out of the firing line, but R. made him go back. You know the rest of the story—how he was finally carried out because an unknown voice from the battlefield said: "Take that one, he is engaged to be married." In the hospital, where there were seven hundred wounded and only three nurses, he lay for six days without having his human wants attended to, and you can imagine the state his father found him in.

There have been some appealing and terribly funny negroes from the Soudan in the hospital. It took four men to hold one poor fellow in bed whilst his dreadful wounds were dressed. Finally he covered each wound with both his hands and prayed over them, and when his prayer, his queer, uncouth prayer was finished, he then allowed the doctor to dress the wound. I am glad to say that

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

the surgeon was patient enough to spend three-quarters of an hour over this single barbarian brought from so far to suffer so much in the land of culture and civilisation.

Devotedly your daughter,
M.

To Miss Anna Lusk, New York.

PARIS, Nov. 7th, 1914.

DEAREST ANNA,

In the contemplation of the great griefs of those who have lost their own, of those who have given their all ; in the contemplation of the bravest country in the world—Belgium—ravaged from frontier to frontier, laid barren and waste, smoked, ruined, devastated and scarred by wholesale massacre of civilian women and children, our hearts have been crushed. Our souls have been appalled by the burdens of others, and by the future problems of Belgium, not to speak of one quarter of France. Much of the north has been wiped out, and the stories of individual suffering and insults too terrible to dwell upon, you will say.

One of my old clerks in the Bon Marché has had his little nephew come back to him from Germany—a peaceful young middle-class man

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

pursuing his studies in a German town—with both his hands cut off!

The other day in the Gare du Nord, waiting for a train, there was a stunning Belgian officer—not a private—he was a captain in one of the crack regiments. His excitement was terrible, he was almost beside himself with anguish and with anger. In a little village he had seen one woman violated by seven Germans in the presence of her husband; then the husband shot, the woman shot, and her little baby cut in four pieces on a butcher's block. You can hardly call this the common course of war. He was a Belgian gentleman, and I should consider this a document of truth.

But there are so many that I cannot prolong, and will not—what is the use? Every now and then a people needs to be wiped off the face of the earth, or a contingent blotted out that a newer and finer civilisation shall prevail. Certainly this is the case with Germany. They say here that the Emperor and Crown Prince will be tried by law and sentenced to death as common criminals, the Emperor as a murderer and the Crown Prince as a robber, for his goods trains were stacked with booty and loot. Think of it, a Prince! Everywhere the Germans pass they leave their filthy insults behind them, in the beautiful châteaux and

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

in the delicate rooms of the French women—the indications of their passing, not deeds of noble heroism that can be told of foes as well as of friends, but filthy souvenirs of the passing of creatures for whom the word “barbarian” is too mild !

Here is a more spiritual picture.

Robert Le Roux, jun., was buried yesterday. You will have read in the previous pages here the story of his exploits on the battlefield—the closing of his young life in bravely leading his troops up the hill to certain death. And yesterday I went to St. Germain to his funeral.

We left Paris at eight o'clock to go to St. Germain, which, in normal times takes thirty-five minutes ; yesterday it took us two hours by train.

France and Paris now are sacred. Even the station of St. Lazare, so often marked with partings for America, Sunderings and farewells on one side, and then happy returns after months of work. St. Lazare station has for me a particular individuality, and you know they call that big stone waiting-room there the “Salle des pas perdus,”—“The room of lost footsteps,” and for ever it will mean to me now the footsteps of those soldiers who have gone to the front and gone on further.

We knitted in the train our woollen comforters

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

for the soldiers, and read the war news and talked. The last time I had seen young Robert he was a little boy, in short breeches and socks. His mother brought him to Versailles and he played with us in the garden there—a strong, splendid looking young French boy. Now I was going to his funeral, and he was engaged to be married, with all his hopes before him, and on this same train was his little fiancée, in her long crêpe veil, broken-hearted ; and his little sister, and the father, who had followed his son's campaign with such ardour and such tenderness ; and his uncle, Dr. D., of whom I spoke previously—the splendid sergeant-major whose only son had just been killed by the enemy. A train of sorrow !—and only one of so many, so many.

The church at St. Germain is simple and very old. The doors were all hung with heavy snow-white cloth, and before the door stood the funeral car drawn by white horses, all in white, and instead of melancholy hearse plumes there were bunches of flags, and over all hung the November mist enveloping, softening, and there was a big company of Cuirassiers guarding the road.

We went in, and the church was crowded from the nave to the doors, and all the nave and the little chapels were blazing with the lily lights of the candles. It was all so white and so pure, so

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

effulgent, so starry. There was an uplift about it, an élan ; tragic as it all was, there was ever that feeling of beyond, beyond !

Before the altar lay the young man's coffin—that leaden coffin that had stood by his father in the fortress of Toul for three weeks, waiting for the dead. It was completely covered by the French flag, and the candles burnt around it.

Beside me was a woman with her husband. She wept so bitterly through the whole service that my heart was just wrung for her, and her husband's face, as his red-lidded eyes stared out in the misty church, was one of the most tragic things I ever saw. I wept, of course, and I have not cried very much since the war broke out, but her grief was too much for me. Finally she turned to me and said : " Madame, I only had one son, he was so charming, so good ; he has fallen before the enemy, and I don't know where he is buried ! " Just think of it ! There she was, at the funeral of another man's son because he was a soldier ! Link upon link of sorrow and suffering—such broken hearts. . . .

The whole service was musical, nothing else but violins and harps. It was the most beautiful thing I ever heard, so quiet and so sweet ; and that little group touched me profoundly—Le Roux with his daughter and the little fiancée—

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

and that was all. In that coffin lying under the flag Bessie had placed at Toul her little silk pillow for the young soldier's head, and his love-letters in a little packet lay by his side. Around his arm he had worn a little ribbon taken from the hair of his sweetheart, and at the very last when he was dying and the hospital nurse was about to unknot it—I don't know why—the boy put up his feeble hand to prevent her ; of course they buried it with him, and, as you think of it, you can hear that unknown voice on the battle-field, that, as the stretcher-bearers came to look for the wounded, called out : “ Take him, he is engaged to be married ; and leave me.”

Oh, if out of it all arise a better civilisation, purer motives, less greed for money, more humanitarian and unselfish aims, we can bear it.

I think of America with an ever-increasing love ; I am proud to belong to that young and far-off country, but if our voice is raised now in encouragement for Belgium, encouragement for the Allies, and in reprobation of these acts of dishonourable warfare and cruel barbarism, I shall love my country more.

How superb the figure of the Belgian king is, standing there among the remnant of his army, and surrounded by his destroyed and ruined

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

empire, and the cries of the people in his ears—a sublime figure. When the war is over I hope they will make him king of France and Belgium and Germany—that would be a fitting reward. He is certainly one of the biggest figures in history.

Yours as ever,

M.

To Mrs. F. B. Van Vorst, Hackensack, N.J.

PARIS, Oct. 1914.

MY DEAR MARY,

. . . In June last, driving home from the Bois, I noticed a beautiful building in process of construction at Neuilly—a very good example of a château of the time of François Premier, pink bricks and white filling, turrets, terraces, etc. I was told it was the Lycée Pasteur, a college for boys, supposedly to open in the month of October to receive the young students. Little did I think what a different aspect the place would wear when I should see it again on the day when I drove up to offer my services as a Red Cross nurse ! All along the front now were the ranged khaki-coloured motor ambulances, all bearing the sign of the inevitable Red Cross ; private ambulances too, attached to the hospital for service, decorated with the flags of France and England and the red

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

and white flag of the Red Cross. And here and there across the courtyard flitted the nurses in their snow-white uniforms, with the Red Cross on their breast. On the terraces of the boys' school were grouped the invalid and convalescent soldiers in their khaki-coloured dressing-gowns, red or yellow fezzes on the heads of some of them, and taking care of them, in her white uniform with the Red Cross on breast and coif, their nurse.

I went into the entrance of the hospital, which was full of animation: orderlies in their white linen uniforms, and the little boy scouts, young sons of gentlemen, too young to go to war and whom their mothers had permitted to leave school in order that they might serve their country; gallant little fellows, working day and night, out in the rain and the cold, their little bare knees reddened and chafed with exposure, and some of them wearing, when on their bicycles, silk and woollen wristlets knitted over here by the American women.

At the desks were groups of men I had known in the world, occupied with the duties of the organisation. I sat down on a bench to wait and waited a long time; and just here I want to give you a little picture.

We used to see, sitting on the same bench for five days running, a tiny little French child—

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

poor little thing—a mite of a girl, brought by her mother and seated there to wait while the mother went upstairs, day after day, to see her man in the wards. He was hopelessly wounded; there wasn't a stray hope for him. Whilst he was there, he was decorated with the Military Medal for his services on the field. Little did the child, waiting there day after day, know what was going on upstairs; and we were so struck by her docility and patience, by those little clasped hands in her lap, and those tiny little legs so high above the floor. She was there for hours whilst her mother spent those last hours of life with her husband. One of the orderlies went up to the little girl and said to her, just for something to say: "What do you think of the hospital?" And she looked up at him with a sweet smile and answered (in French, of course): "I think it is a very nice place, only there aren't any dolls here." That was what the little thing was thinking about, and you can imagine that the next day when she came to wait, she didn't make the same complaint, for beside her sat the biggest and handsomest doll that the orderly could find. And so she waited whilst her father "passed on" and her little heart was comforted as she unconsciously kept watch with her mother.

I became impatient at waiting so long. The

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

excitement was tense and very keen, and I couldn't put up then with formalities ; so without asking any further questions, I pushed the door open and went myself in search of Mrs. Vanderbilt, and, for the first time, on the other side of that door, I felt I was part of a hospital. I found Mrs. Vanderbilt standing at the door of the operating-room. In my blue uniform with brass buttons and the Badge of the Red Cross (of a private detachment), I looked what I was not—useful and competent—and why she ever took me I fail to know. Some time I shall ask her ! She must have felt my enthusiasm and intense interest, but I think the real reason that I was accepted was that there were not enough nurses to care for the wounded who were being brought in.

I have always wanted to know Mrs. Vanderbilt. The first thing I ever heard about her was that she was doing good. It impressed me in a vague way. And then I heard again that she was doing more and greater good ; until finally she grew to stand for me as some one constantly doing good everywhere—a most enviable reputation ! I grew to think of her, not as a figure of a society woman. I forgot her vast wealth and her position, and I thought of her only as a great human heart, as a woman of broad and generous sympathies, occupied with the sufferings of others and giving

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

herself to humanity. I used to ask about her from others who knew her whenever I had the opportunity ; but I must confess that I hardly expected ever intimately to cross her path.

When I pushed open that door at the American Ambulance and went in and found myself actually standing before Mrs. Vanderbilt, without any introduction, I did not realise even then that a long-looked-for moment had come. Even in that moment, I forgot who she was, eager in my desire to become sensibly part of that great machine, the American Ambulance ; and I forgot that the quiet, dignified woman in her nurse's dress was the great and celebrated Mrs. Vanderbilt. I think that in a moment, however, a sympathy was established between us. I hope so and I believe it. I told her that I had made some studies in Red Cross work and that I wanted to join the auxiliaries here. Mrs. Vanderbilt was president of the auxiliaries and had the whole corps under her charge. I did not know this, but was so fortunate as to come immediately to the right source, and, as I said before, she took me immediately.

At first I was put in the bandage-room, but very shortly Mrs Vanderbilt transferred me to the gangrene ward. As I went into that ward and shut the door behind me, my heart would have

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

sunk if it had had time, but it never did. The odour seemed a conglomeration of every foul and evil thing—penetrating, dank ; and from then on that terrible odour seemed to penetrate to my very bones, and when I went out into the streets of Paris I wondered what had happened to the city. When I got home I dropped my garments in an anteroom. Fancy living in that, day after day, as those nurses do ; and you never get used to it—never ! Into that ward were put all the worst cases of gangrene, and when I went in there were seven men in those beds all infected, terribly infected ; and the only hope was to save as many as could be saved from putrefaction and death ; and that is what the American Ambulance is doing.

My first thought was that the things were not properly cleansed, and I said to the head nurse, who barely had time to give me a nod and greet me : “ May I burn something here ? ” I wish you could have seen her look at me—not unkindly. “ Why, yes ; you can burn anything you like.” You will hardly believe it, but I burned some paper ! I heard one nurse say to another : “ She doesn’t know what it is,” and then they went on with their duties. The work never stopped in the gangrene ward—never.

When finally they took me from the gangrene

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

ward, I was loth to go—I didn't want to leave it, I begged to be allowed to stay. It doesn't seem possible, does it?

Well, I worked during that first day, performing the services asked of me, and I found out what distances and what real fatigue meant. (One day I borrowed a pedometer, and found that I had walked twelve miles that day, besides attending to my various duties.) It was nearly six o'clock and I hadn't seen a single wound, and what I was going to do when I did, I didn't want to think. One of the chief surgeons came in to attend to the dressings. We were the last on his list: we had to be—we were so infected and undesirable. Nothing could be done after us—we were the limit. So the poor surgeon, after attending to all his other duties and performing his operations, came in here to our poor men. . . .

From the gangrene ward to Miss Curphey's ward was transposition into paradise. Here is the smart, chic ward of the hospital and there are eight officers in it. I left my obnoxious men with great regret. And I am afraid Miss C. didn't want to have me! She thought me only an auxiliary of no use; but when she found I *was* serious and determined and had no thought but to serve her, we became great friends and I can never forget what she has taught me. She is

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

charming and pretty and one of the best nurses in the hospital.

I want to tell you of the picturesqueness and interest of the first room from the receiving hall where, direct from the trenches the men are carried in from the motors—a long line of stretchers with their pitiful burdens, the men with their wounds dressed on the field, men who have not had their boots off, or their clothes, for three weeks, some of them with grey, strange faces—such anxious looks, such pallor! And those dreadful dressings that have been on for days. I shall never forget the courage it took to take the safety-pins out of a gangrened wound for the first time: it wasn't pleasant.

Miss Curphey's ward is full of beautiful flowers and beautiful fruits. There are no disagreeable smells there. It is as fresh as a daisy. And out of the windows we can see the roofs of several houses and the waving trees and the church, whose bell tolls constantly—every day for too many hours—although the mortality is not great.

It is wonderful to find how completely you can forget yourself in this hospital, and how every thought of personal disinclination disappears before the needed service. But it is hard work. When I go home at night, I feel like the little boy whose mother made his trousers and he said he didn't



A WARD IN THE AMERICAN AMBULANCE AT NECHLY



WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

know whether he was coming or going. I can scarcely move from fatigue. At the end of the day, an extra demand is sometimes almost more than flesh and blood can bear. The other day I had just served the eight men their suppers and was going home—blissful words!—when Captain K., who is a regular spoilt darling, sat up in bed and called to me as I was slipping through the door: “Oh, I say, nurse, do you think I could have a little jam?” Now that doesn’t sound like anything to you, does it? but it meant about four minutes’ walk over those stone floors, up and down stairs. It was a tragedy to me. Of course I started off for the jam, and when I brought it back encountered my superior, Miss C., who gave me an icy glance and said: “You had no right to go and get jam without permission.” And that doesn’t sound much, but a reproof from a superior nurse is a very serious thing; it hurts and upsets you horribly, and you wish you were dead, and that you had never worked in an hospital, and all sorts of foolish things; and you blush and want to throw the jam at the soldier’s head, even though he is a magnificent military man. But here is the point of the story. The captain, who was frightfully wounded and had shown the courage of a lion, heard it. He could stand before the German guns, but he couldn’t face his head

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

nurse's displeasure. I, anxious as to the result, answered: "Of course I got it, Miss C., because Captain K. wanted it and——" What was my horror to hear him say: "Oh no, I didn't—I never asked for anything of the sort!" He couldn't face Miss C.! The next day, out of the hour, I laughed at it and told her about it. I said: "I was really too furious for anything when that Englishman asked for jam." And she looked at me reproachfully and said: "Remember, he is one of our wounded heroes." And of course I did. He has jam every night now. . . .

All the northern part of France is devastated and in ruins. Twenty-one departments are in the hands of the invaders. Famous industries, whose beauty and grace and utility you have loved and proved, are no more. There is no more linen, no more beautiful glass, no more wool. The new and the ancient patterns, the exquisite moulds, are all wiped off the face of the earth. These are some of the material disasters. . . . Of the industrious, peace-loving inhabitants, hundreds and thousands are captives, hundreds and thousands are utterly homeless, destitute, hungry and unclothed. . . .

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

To Miss B. Andrews, N.Y.

EDGWARE, Oct. 22nd, 1914.

DEAREST BELLE,

Thank you so much for your letter, so unique that I shall put it under glass—the first one received for too long to count !

I returned here last night after a three weeks' absence, to find London celebrating Trafalgar Day, the city gay and everything going strong—even the Russian Ballet. The recruiting is going well, so one can't blame the spirit of the times which keeps its temper up, and after all, it is no doubt better to be normal as long as possible. But coming to England, as I did, from sights that England could not wish to see, from the bedside of men that England loves and honours, I could not help but feel the great pathos of it. Even the white and crimson flag in flowers, as it lay across the iron flank of the big lion at the base of Nelson's monument, was like the red cross on the snowy hospital sheet—lilies and blood. And if it is all glorious, as indeed it is, Death is so irreparably over it all that high-hearted courage is sometimes apt to fail.

I came out here to little Edgware, at 11 o'clock at night, through streets scarcely lighted, where tramways and omnibuses are illuminated by

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

muted lamps and ghastly blue lights, where the road is scarcely safe to travel for its forced darkness, and all along the wayside the little cottage windows, with their deepest lights, seemed to call the *sons* home again—and so vainly ! And before my eyes as it will often come, I saw the face of Charlie Hern as he lay in Ward 69. It was one of his good days ; the ghastly colour had not yet spread into his cheeks ; and in his dialect, hard for me to understand, he kept repeating the name of his home—" Mountain Ash ; " and you'd scarcely have known the word it sounded so strange in his country tongue. He'd written to them, but he hadn't heard. Would I write ? And I promised. And the next time I saw him was down in the operating-room, when they wheeled him in and he was too infected and dangerous for me to dare to approach, standing as I was by my sound, healthy Guernsey boy. Individual cases, if you like ; but I thank Heaven, that I can feel their appeal. Women make better nurses who do. You needn't be a sickly sentimentalist ; they're no good ; but unless the human heart remains deep and its expression free, the world isn't worth living in. Arras, Rheims, and the beauties that have gone out for ever would have been spared by a race where there was less science and more heart.

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

It's all very well to laugh at amateur nurses, and if you will recall one of my letters, written in London during the times of my Red Cross examinations, you will see that I laughed first and with you. *But that is all changed.* The auxiliaries and the amateurs at the American Ambulance have done perfectly marvellous work. Those ladies gifted first with intelligence and tenderness, common sense and dignity, are now difficult to distinguish—some of them—from the professionals; and even as far as the battle line, lying so red and so trampled in Belgium, they have done superb work.

I crossed this time with the wife of an Irish major in one of the big regiments. She had come from the Astoria Hotel, where her husband was lying wounded. She said to me: "My husband asked to have the two French lady auxiliaries to take care of him—two charming Frenchwomen, kind and gentle beyond words—because the English trained nurses were so anxious to be out at the front and in the trenches, that they couldn't give him the care he needed." At the Astoria were two nurses who had come in from the battle of the Aisne—one of them with her arm blown off and the other with both legs injured for life. This lady on the boat had seen and talked to both these women, and they told

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

her that the Germans had systematically shelled the Red Cross hospitals where they worked, and nearly all the wounded soldiers were killed.

Of course there is a great deal of inefficient help offered, that goes without saying ; but it is quickly weeded out and cast away, as nothing but an iron constitution and real devotion could stand the strain.

My Guernsey boy got well fast. That is the happy note in it all—when they get well fast and go home. And I assure you it was a picturesque thing to see him sitting there by the bedside, my dear, getting into those colossal boots and into his khaki clothes that had been stripped off the night he came. He was big and tall and the convalescence had done him good, and he went off weak but happy to Guernsey—to the fruits and flowers and the sea air—for a month, and then back again.

After leaving my French lieutenant for two weeks whilst they operated on more important people, they finally decided to get the ball out of him, and I decided that I was going to see it done—not for curiosity—there's plenty to satisfy *that* in these wards!—but because he was a sensitive boy, scarcely more than a child, and I determined that I would not leave him, and I told him so. I must confess that it seemed to help the thing

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

along to know that he was going to be taken down from his bed and brought back there by his own nurse. We stood with him in the ante-chamber of the operating-room from one to four, on our feet, the orderly and I, I mean. Quite a time, hey? Do you know, it was quite a fortunate wait. The lieutenant got over his nervous strain, and I warmed his feet and hands; and by the time they came round for us, we were laughing and talking about all kinds of things. So we went in. This was my second operation, and a very mild one, for the ball was only under one of the ribs and involved simply an opening of the shoulder and extraction. Dr. Dubouchet is a perfect marvel. I suppose you can't easily beat him, even by Blake. He is the president of the hospital, and went through the Russo-Japanese War and the Abyssinian massacres, and is altogether a very charming person. Dr. Dubouchet, when he had fished out the ball, took it with his fingers right out of the wound and threw it across the floor, all covered as it was with blood, and I picked it up and had it washed. The first thing that the boy said when he came to his senses was: "Show me the ball." And I had it there for him, wrapped up in a little bit of cloth. He had a temperature and looked so blond, and so appealing, in his poor little hospital jacket, so at the mercy of these contending

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

forces, such a light bit of humanity to stand against the battle fire. And he kept on saying : " Il faut être vainqueurs ! Dites-moi que nous sommes vainqueurs ! Qu'importe si moi je meurs, si les nouvelles sont bonnes ? " It happened that the news was bad, but I assured him to the contrary, and stayed there far beyond my time until he was somewhat soothed.

Don't think for a moment that I am going to describe at length all the hospital cases, repeating myself *ad infinitum* ; but these are just little thumb notes of the war of 1914, and may be of interest some day.

The little flat on the Place du Palais Bourbon had many pretty pictures in it, some of those last evenings before I left, I assure you. I wish that you could have brushed aside the veil of distance and have looked in on my little study, untouched and unchanged, for I have never put anything away in it. It is just as it was, excepting that the big war map covers the wall and the flags flutter outside the window. There was a bright fire on the hearth—you know its changing colours, its lilac and its ruby flames. And there on the sofa was Madelon Hancock, in her dark blue and white dress, with the Red Cross on her breast ; and sweet little nurse Wells, in the lilac and white of the London Hospital, with the fluttering folds

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

of the veil-cap on her head ; and I wore the white of the American Ambulance. We were smoking, of course, and talking, and the two of them had just come from Antwerp, where they had been from the beginning in the British Field Hospital. Theirs are tales that make mine absolutely pale. When the Germans came within range they destroyed the aqueducts, and these nurses, with their 170 patients, were almost without water. Just think what that means in a hospital ! The little they used had to be carried from distant wells. Madelon and the chief doctor together dug a cesspool for the refuse in the garden, and as they dug the shells flew about them, the bullets snipping the leaves from the trees ; and they were such veterans by then and so hardened that they laughed even over their putrid work. These two women, with the other nurses, evacuated the hospital, packing those miserable, mutilated bodies like sardines in the omnibuses which a few weeks before had been rolling around with the travelling public in London. And Madelon and Miss Wells were fifteen hours travelling through the day and night with their poor suffering load—the bandages soaked and soaked again ; the dangling limbs, just amputated, some of them, and scarcely dressed. Think of it—all the courage and fortitude demanded of these women, and the

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

nerve! They were obliged to make detours to escape the live electric wires placed by the Germans across the road. Their last omnibus had scarcely left the pontoon bridge across the Scheldt, when it was blown up behind them. Through the noise of war, with the wounded in the buses, groaning and crying out, themselves wet nearly to the bone and icy cold, they drove to Ghent, placed their charges in safety there, only to be told to evacuate again. On to Ostend—on to the boats for England. Out of the 170, only three died on the way, and these girls, with a few others, brought their hurt children safely into port. There were, these sane and normal women found, humorous sights even in this horror. On the boat, they had scarcely lain down to snatch a moment's rest when they were called to a cabin where a woman refugee was in labour! Miss Wells is, of course, a regular nurse, but Madelon knows little more about the birth of children than you do. Yet the baby was born and Madelon received it, washed it in a steamboat cuspedor, holding it between her knees and powdered it with Colgate's tooth powder. Miss Wells says that she will never forget it as long as she lives—that morsel of humanity, holding with its tiny little hands on to the edges of the cuspedor.

I think you can imagine that, although the

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

waiting list at the American Ambulance is enormous, Madelon and Nurse Wells were taken on immediately. I have now three nurses there belonging to my section of the Entente Cordiale. Mrs. Vanderbilt has joined and I am going to ask Dr. Dubouchet to join as well.

I am awfully sorry that the little bird is dead, but I am glad it was the lady bird. They can be spared better now than the boy birds! And I suppose that this one has now fulfilled all his promise and is sporting a long plume.

Of course, I am sure that you all think of us. One knows that. But you can form no possible conception of the atmospheric and psychological state of things, and how difficult it is to form an opinion of the value of anything when one is in the midst of it.

I didn't care at all about the *Times* clipping. They always treat me perfectly rottenly. They've never given me a good criticism. I never read book criticisms or subscribe to them any way. George Eliot always said that the ones that praised her she didn't believe, and the ones that criticised her made her mad; and I feel the same way.

Here in London all the shops are open and the fabric gloves in the Burlington Arcade will soon be no more. The fabric was made in Germany

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

and put up here, and is now exhausted. The man has laid aside all his remaining stock of your size—a couple of dozen pairs—and if you want them, will you write to him direct? as there won't be any more, and the price has not gone up, for a wonder.

In Paris everything is opening slowly, although there is no trade whatsoever, and no one would want to dress and go about like a jay when every second person you see is in mourning.

The German losses amount now to nearly 800,000, the French probably to 500,000, and these figures were given some time ago.

Dresses are very short, up to the tops of the boots, and the whole style military; and gaiters are worn—long gaiters, which would please you, only there's no one to wear them, as I said.

Creed is closed as tight as a drum. All the boys are at the front, in different armies. Paquin is open, and the dear old Hôtel du Rhin is just exactly as it always has been, excepting that it is closed and Hoffmann a mystery. Nobody knows. I wonder if we shall ever know what became of him?

I have had two offers to go to the front.

It must be too much fun to have Bunny with you—darling little boy! And who keeps the geraniums blooming in the window boxes? I

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

am deeply interested in all the things you do over there, and it is a great rest to read about them. That's all for the present.

Yours with all my heart,

M.

To Mrs. Victor Morawetz, New York.

PARIS, Nov. 11th, 1914.

DEAREST VIOLET,

You ask me to tell you something of Glory Hancock. She made a wonderful record for herself at the American Ambulance, where they loved her, from the humblest to the highest. The patients simply adored her. With her dark blue field ambulance dress and her splendid carriage, she was a fine, impressive figure. Heaven knows she had enough to do in her ward of forty men—a terrible amount—and if she had not been so restless she could have stayed on and been invaluable to the end. Her little friend, Miss Wells of the London Hospital, is a perfect nurse, and they made a fine running team. Imagine what a void they left! And now they are back at the front—"Somewhere in Flanders!"

Oh, it's a great time, my dear, if you are working in it. I had really hoped that yesterday would be my last day at the hospital, because I am aching to write; but I absolutely hadn't the courage to

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

tell them when I went up yesterday that I wouldn't come again. There's no one to take my place in two wards on the third floor, and until there is I simply must go on. So I have girded up my loins and I feel a little more rested to-day and shall return for a few days at least. On Monday I think there will be three auxiliaries.

In my ward I have three men from Tunis and one of them has two frightful wounds—they beggar description. Yesterday I kept covering his eyes with my hands all the time they were dressing them, as he tried to peer round like a poor little monkey. His body is chocolate colour, and on the skin, soft as silk, his great, terrible open-mouthed wounds make a strange effect. I guess he thought so too, poor dear! When the doctors came to dress them, he had to be held in order to keep him from grabbing the doctor. Every now and then during the dressings he would kiss my hands. Of course you can't get sentimental! With seven men to attend to, you don't shed tears over one poor little nigger from Tunis; but your heart's stirred all the time. . . .

Paris is growing normal. Shops are opening. Everything promises a loosening of the tension. I have filled my cellar with coal and wood, as they say the supply is going to lack. As for my own plans, they are just now more than sketchy.

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

I want to go to Rome and to America, and I will let you know definitely which I am going to do when I know myself.

I hope you will like the little book of poems. I have paid for them on this side, so anything you sell them for will be clear profit and just send the money to whatever Belgian fund you are interested in.

Thank you for offering to send the nurse. For Heaven's sake, do !

Last night, at the end of the hospital day, I brought down with me in a tiny motor belonging to Vera Arkwright the head nurse of the hospital, Miss Devereux, who has charge of the American Hospital in times of peace. She was so exhausted and worn out with the terrible day that she could hardly speak. The fresh air and the drive down began to rest her, and when she got here in my little study, before the fire, so quiet and so sweet, with a good little dinner, and with Bessie's society and mine to cheer her, she bloomed out like a flower. She is a New York hospital nurse, and gave me another picture to remember in the little study, under the war map, all in snow white, with no cap, and just the gold medal of the New York hospital round her neck. Such a fine spiritual face ; such a strong, dignified woman ! We didn't talk much of the hospital, but we talked,

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

all three of us, of spiritual things, and it was a wonderful thing to find her one of those simple Christians, full of the very light of God, strong in the best sense of the word, living by faith. I don't think I have enjoyed any evening half so much for a long time. I am sure that you will respond to this note and care too. It is fine to feel that the hospital there is under the spell of this noble woman who "believes in fairies," as Barrie's play says—who believes in miracles. There wasn't a discordant second in the long evening and she went back with pink cheeks and bright eyes to those wards where three were to die that night and she had to go on her noble watch. She spoke in an especially kindly way of the auxiliaries and of their extraordinary powers of endurance. She said that she would not have believed that women of the world unused to discipline or to concentrated effort, could have been what these women have been at the Ambulance. Vera Arkwright, for instance, has not missed a single day since she went there.

The dressing carts are so picturesque. You see, I naturally see the notes of colour that things make—I can't help it—and when I went out from the hospital, Vera stood there in her blue dress, with her tiny little cap on her head—she is faultlessly beautiful, and very celebrated for her looks

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

—and all around her was a pile of the most dreadful bandages you ever saw. (I won't describe them.) She was gathering them up to destroy them and to prepare her cart for the next trip. Both she and Madelon are able to do their dressings themselves.

I am mailing this week a letter to the *New York Times*, making an appeal for the American Ambulance. It is a poor letter—couldn't be worse—but still, it is a very hard thing to write. I hope you'll see it and speak to people, though I know you hate to ask for donations of any kind.

Ever devotedly yours,

M. V.

To Mr. F. B. Van Vorst, N.Y.

Nov. 20th, 1914.

MY DEAR BROTHER,

I wonder, as I sit here, in one of those rare, quiet moments that fall in a nurse's day, whilst I am preparing my charts, what they are thinking of in this silent room.

This group is singularly silent. They do not talk from bed to bed, as some of the more loquacious do. Directly opposite is one of those fragile bits of humanity that the violent wind of war has blown, like an unresisting leaf, into the vortex. Monsieur Gilet is a humble little school teacher from some

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

humble little village school in a once peaceful commune, where in another little village school his humble little wife teaches school as he does. He is so light and so frail that I can lift him myself with ease. He has a shrapnel wound in his side and they have not found the ball. His thin cheeks are scarlet. He is gentleness and sweetness itself. What has he ever done to be crucified like this? Monsieur Gilet is not thinking of his burning wound. He is thinking of the little woman in the province of Cher. How can she come to see him? She has no congé. When will she come to see him? For his life is all there in that war-shattered country. She has a baby twelve weeks old, born since he went to battle. That's what he is thinking of. When will she come?

On his right is a superb Arab, with an arm and hand so broken and so mutilated that it is hard to hold it without shuddering when the doctors drain it. On his head I have carefully adjusted a bright yellow flannel fez. His mild docile eyes follow the nurse as she does for him the few little things she can to make him more at ease. For every service done, he thanks her in a sweet, soft voice. Just now, when I left him to come over here and sit down before my table, his eyes filled with tears. He can say a few words of French.

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

He kisses my hand with Oriental grace. "Merci, ma mère."

On Monsieur Gilet's left lies a man whose language is as hard to understand, very nearly, as the Arab's—almost unintelligible—a *patois* of the Midi. He is a gardener, used only to the care of plants and flowers. He is a big, rugged giant, and so strong, and so silent a sufferer that since his entrance to the hospital he has not made one murmur or one complaint, or asked one service, and excepting when spoken to, he never says a word. Then he gives you a radiant smile and some token of gratitude. They operated on him to-day. There is shrapnel in his eye. He will never fully see his gardens again, and he is so strong and so patient and so able to bear pain, that they operated on him without anæsthetics, and he walked to and from the operating room—a brave, silent, docile giant, singularly appealing. . . . He is thinking of his gardens, trodden out of all semblance of beauty, for he had been working in the north before the heel of the barbarian crushed out his flowers for ever and blotted out his sight.

Your sister,

M.

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

To Mrs. Morawetz, N.Y.

PARIS, Nov. 25th, 1914.

DEAREST VIOLET,

I wish I had the power to make Paris visible to you these late November days—some of them so clear and frosty that the very fires burn brighter for the sparkling air; some of them, as to-day for instance, misty and gloomy and full of such portentous bodings. Through the streets, everywhere, pass the ambulance motors—those of the Dames de France, those of the Croix Rouge, those of the American Ambulance, those of the many auxiliary hospitals, British and French—grey waggons, with their meaningful Red Cross. And autos—grey again, many of them—full of officers rushing from the Etat Major, from the quarters of Gallieni, up here by the Invalides, whirling rapidly through the streets, across the Pont Alexandre, up the Champs Elysées, out through the gates and on and on. Everywhere War is stamped upon the face of this city that you and I have known and loved so at peace. There are now, in these cruelly cold winter days, the tragic sights of faces worn and pinched. There are the constant sights of new mourning—oh, so many women in heavy crape! Then, too, everywhere soldiers—the petit pioupiou in his red

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

breeches, and now and then the khaki uniform of England, and occasionally the Belgian.

Paris seems wonderful to me—never so adored ! It seems to me these days that I carry it on my heart as something infinitely loved—as a human thing, threatened, troubled, menaced still—and which must be protected, *is* protected by the blood of many hearts.

A little while after my return, as you know through my letters, things seemed normal to us—almost secure. It has been tragically pathetic to watch that attempt for balance—that swinging of the pendulum of human reason and human character to the adjustment. Every one has tried to go on ; industries have tried to lift up their heads. Along the Rue de la Paix, now and again, the shops would open, blinds lifting up like the cautious opening of a half-shut eyelid, as if to see if there were anything worth looking at. And the commerçant, anxious to do a little business, eager to keep on some of the sorely dependent workpeople. Doucet has kept his entire staff “à tour de rôle”—one lot one week, the next week the other. Many shops do the same. At Jeanne Hallée's, poor little Fernande has lost one brother in the trenches. You would scarcely know her ; she looks fifty years old. And all the others we know have husbands and brothers and lovers “là-bas.”

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

A few days ago, there began to come over me again that spirit of unrest—that strange, psychic foreboding that I had before war was declared last August. The fact of Bessie's marriage and the few little things that I have had to do for her, the fact that I have been perfectly settled and comfortable at home and found it so adorable and so sweet, even the hospital, could not dissipate, in my mind, that anxiety ; and to-night I know what it all went for and meant. We have been told to-day that the Germans are at Chantilly. Just how true that is, who can say ? But again, there is no doubt about it that Paris is in the scheme of those dreadful, dreadful hordes. Now that we all know what they are, now that we have the documents of their passing through the north, there is hardly a Parisian can bear the idea of a repeated late August and early September. Bessie confessed the other day that at that time, when Robert decided to remain alone at the *Matin*, she went down to the office and besought him, with tears streaming down her face, to leave while there was yet time. She told me that she was terrified—that it just seemed to her that she couldn't bear it. She had bought an enormous quantity of provisions—three armoires full—and decided to stock her rez-de-chaussé windows with them, label them " Delikatessen " and put out

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

her American flag ; then, with her police dog by her side, to take her chances ! . . .

To-day at Bessie's we had Monseigneur Battiefol, the *évêque* who is to marry her, to luncheon. He is a perfect dear—so clever and so charming. We had a lovely time together, we four, sitting around that pretty table on the eve of her marriage. . . .

I have just spent an hour with the Marquise de S. It has been lovely beyond words to see her again. She has just come home. . . . Her son Henri was well the last she heard of him, and I really think that her great love and her constant prayers will keep him safe to the end. Each time we have been out together, we bought some warm comforting things or some delicacy to send him in those dreadful trenches.

The stories of courage are many. Lately a group of French Zouaves, with hands tied behind their backs, were marched by the Germans in front of their lines. As the French advanced to fire on the enemy, the Germans cried out, "Don't fire ; you'll kill your own men !" And the Zouaves called out to their comrades : "Mais tirez-donc, tirez donc ! C'est pour la patrie !" And the French fired, understanding that those who died thus for their country, with their bound hands, disarmed, died as gloriously as it is possible to die.

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

Goblet d'Alviella's documents have just come to me from Belgium, and I have sent them on to you. They tell their tale, do they not? And it's a tale that goes on without ceasing—one long-drawn-out horror, from a people incapable of either humanity or soul. God knows that, if they conquer, I don't want to live in the same world with them.

This is the letter I sent to the Paris *New York Herald*.

"It is with profound regret that we learn of the departure of Mr. Herrick from France.

"He is said to be one of the most popular figures of this present momentous time. The Americans and the other nations whose interests he has so ably guarded owe him a debt of appreciative gratitude. He has been equal to a situation demanding, besides the diplomatic talent which his high function presupposes, delicacy, understanding and kindness. He has met a difficult proposition with diplomacy and with heart. This combination has assured him a success which perhaps few Ambassadors have ever attained. He has helped thousands and offended no one. He has shown a wide charity and a tenderness toward the suffering that France will never forget; nor will the American citizens—troubled, anxious and in threatened danger—who received from him his counsel and his protection."

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

Mr. Herrick has made himself perfectly adored here. His letters from the great men of France were most appreciative, and the opinion of the public is that a colossal blunder has been made in recalling a man who understood the situation, and who handled everything with tact, brilliancy and affection for France. He has given me a letter to the American Ambassador in Rome—I am going to quote it to you.

“ I commend in person Miss Van Vorst, whom you know personally and by reputation, but I do desire to especially recommend her to your courtesy and to your care. She has been so invariably sympathetic, so enormously useful in her hospital work at the American Ambulance—as she always is everywhere, where women’s sympathies are drawn. You will be glad to hear of her arrival in Rome. I commission her as my Ambassadors to Rome to say good-bye for Mrs. Herrick and myself, as we are sailing on the *Rochambeau*. Whilst we have a singing in our hearts when we think of home and children, it is with ineffable sadness that we take our departure in the midst of the grief and sorrow which pervades this country, and as we leave the people for whom we have a sincere affection, etc., etc.”

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

I cannot help but think that never in all your life would you find anything as thrilling as Paris is now, although at this moment I would not wish you here. The absence of the heavy vehicles, the absence of all clatter and that senseless rush of people who are spectators of life without, in a way, being participators, is a great improvement. All that has gone and now it seems as though only people who really mean something to the country remain—patriots, people of the soil and of the town, people doing their duty, people absorbed in caring for others, the grave and the self-forgetful, those who have the service of their country at heart and are in its employ. There is absolutely nothing in the city, as far as one can see, that is unreal, and you can't help but feel that all here are part of the web of destiny in a very real fashion, making history with the others—part of this cloud that passes across the face of France. There are no places of amusement open, except the cinemas; although, hesitatingly, the theatres promised to come back, they have not, and probably will not for some time. Most beautiful flowers fill some of the shops—those great, luscious, deep-hearted pinks that you love—and here and there a little cart one deep blue mass of violets. And on the boulevards, in place of the cumbersome old buses, now rolling the

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

p'tit piou-piou hither and thither, are queer old waggonettes, with the sign "Madelène-Bastille" posted up on them. . . .

There was a touching reason for the giving of one special Medaille Militaire in a certain hospital. The soldier had an amputated leg, beside many other wounds, and his sufferings were great. But from that bed of his, during the most painful dressings, not only was there never a word of complaint, but there was such gaiety, such good cheer, such bravoure, such spirited greetings to the occupants of the other beds, that the whole poor amputated ward took courage from him as paling torches are lit from a superior flame. It is satisfying to think that at this time all courage meets its reward, for here, to this bed, the chiefs brought the decoration, not given with the profusion of the Iron Cross—the Médaille Militaire—and pinned it on his breast.

Yours ever,

M.

To Mrs. Victor Morawetz.

PARIS, Nov. 27th, 1914.

DEAREST VIOLET,

Knowing your interest in what comes to us here, I want to tell you as much as I can about yesterday.

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

Bessie spent Wednesday night—the night before her wedding day—here with me. All the evening I had passed waiting in the little study, putting in order old letters—letters that dated back from Bessie's first meeting with my brother. . . . I am going to make this winter, a collection of some of my correspondence, which is interesting beyond words and a real human document. . . . We had a lovely evening together.

The following morning we both dressed tranquilly. Bessie wore a little black tulle dress with just a touch of blue at the bodice ; and she had a fur cape and muff and a very pretty hat, and she looked sweet. The Marquise de Sers sent her auto, and Bessie and I went together first to the Mairie in the Rue de Grenelle. This quarter is familiar and sacred ; we have both lived here for nearly fifteen years. There in the Mairie we found a beautiful old room opening on a lovely garden and set apart for us and the Civil Service. Monseigneur Battiefol was there in his long black bishop's coat, edged with red and the red sash, and the Secretary of the French Academy, witnesses for Robert, and Mr. Herrick and myself witnesses for Bessie, and then Bessie and Robert. They two sat in dark velvet chairs before the desk of the mayor, who has been mayor of this quarter for

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

thirty years. In a second he had married them ; in a second pronounced for the last time " Bessie Van Vorst."

The mayor then rose and made a short address. You know what a bore these things are as a rule, but this happened not to be. Its delivery took about four minutes, I should think, and it was very fine indeed. There, at this momentous and tremendous time in which we live, were gathered in that little room people of unusual distinction. I never heard anything so charming as the way the old Frenchman turned to Mr. Herrick and thanked him for France, and what he said to Robert and Bessie, as you will read, was most apt.

We then went from there to the little chapel just at the back of my house, St. Clotilde, and dear old Bishop Battiefol married them in the sacristy, and we stood around him like a little family. There was absolutely nothing to jar, there were only gathered together people who were dear to each other—Bessie, Robert, and myself and Mr. Herrick, whom we care for very much, and the distinguished old priest and the representative of the Academy. It was a charming memory to gather and put away with many others in this country that has been so much to us all.

The three came home to lunch here with me : we had a delicious wedding breakfast and sat and

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

talked around the fire until four o'clock, and then they went and left me alone.

Bessie looked beautiful, well and happy, and Robert so proud and glad. Little will change in their lives, but I feel once more my loneliness and how the receding tide goes back and takes with it each time some treasure and buries it irrevocably far out to sea.

To Miss B. S. Andrews.

Nov. 30th, 1914.

DEAREST BELLE,

This morning I was just sitting down for a long "winter's nap" when Webb brought me the news that Mollie's maid had asked that one or two things should be garnered from the Hôtel du Rhin. Not to make too much of a long story, let me tell you that, on the day that Mollie left, Hoffmann and all his staff tore like mad for Germany, and the police let him get away. He was attached to the military authorities in Germany, he and all his people had been spies for years. Frs.50,000 were handed to him from the German Embassy as he got on the train. Some say he was shot, and others that he escaped. The hotel and all its properties have been handed over to the authorities, and, as



MADAME HUGHES LE ROUX
(HESSIE VAN VORST)



WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

Pierre is going for a soldier, there only remained one day for me to get what I could of your things, as everything is to be sold at auction. Webb and I together danced over and got them all. I wonder if you can think a little bit how I felt going up those five flights of stairs in that cold, deserted hotel, past rooms that were not cold or deserted when I knew them before. Webb had already made one journey over there, and Pierre had refused to open the cupboard, telling her that there was nothing there of yours. You see, he could not very well refuse me. I got everything (and I think I got a little more!) and when, later, Webb returned to take your last belongings in closely packed clothes-baskets, she was perfectly flabbergasted—and as she is as honest as the day you can imagine how disgusted she was to hear Pierre absolutely refuse to let the maid of another lady take away her lady's things! He told Webb quite coolly that he and the concierge had to get something out of it for themselves. I have two trunks, and all the pretty things that you left behind. It gave me a real emotion to see them, and to smell the scent in Mollie's scent-bottle put the last touch to it all. If you want these things packed and sent to America, you must let me know, otherwise I shall keep them all here.

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

To Mr. F. B. Van Vorst, Hackensack, N.J.

PARIS, Dec. 4th, 1914.

MY DEAR FREDERICK,

To-morrow will be my last day at the hospital, as I start in the evening for Nice, on my way to Rome. I have lately found myself sole nurse in a ward with nine men. I could not have borne the responsibility long—nor would I have been asked to. It is simply filling in, but I have neither orderly nor auxiliary. The men have been brought from other wards and are convalescing. Only two of them are in bed. By eleven o'clock in the morning, I have made nine beds, given nine men their breakfasts, tidied the ward—of course, the sweeping and cleaning are done by charwomen—and dressed the wounds of nine men, all alone. I have all my materials spread out on a little table—things for sterilizing, etc.—and of course I work in gloves. They are mostly hand wounds, arm wounds and foot wounds, and those of the men who can, come to me at the table, to my little clinic. The first day when I arrived there and unrolled those bandages, I didn't know what I was going to find; but, marvellous to relate, I seemed to be equal to the task. There isn't anything in the world like the expressions on the faces of those men when you have relieved

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

their pain and dressed them well, and they tell you that they have had a good night's sleep, thanks to you, and you see the colour in their cheeks and their temperature is normal and they are doing well. Oh, it's wonderful ! One of the men's legs is amputated above the knee and that is the most serious work I have had to do in the Ambulance.

Bessie came in one day with gifts for my men, and knowing that I had natives in my ward, she brought them each a little mirror. You would not suppose that a piece of glass could give such joy. I wish you could have seen them gazing at their eyes and at their teeth, which, brushed in the hospital, had never been brushed before. One of them—Ali—would have brushed his teeth every hour if we had let him, and then he examined every separate tooth in the mirror. Think of it ! Brought from those deserts, from the mud cabins and the tents, to be cut up like this, and to gaze for the first time at their image in a bit of glass in a military hospital !

Some of the natives are especially picturesque. In the ward next mine there are two Soudanese—not brown, but black. They are savages of the most pronounced type, and both of them are wounded beyond description. One of them has *seventy-five* wounds.

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

In another ward near mine there's a strong, splendid, Englishwoman. She took a dislike to me at the first—didn't know why a writer should want to bother with her profession, but I made up my mind to win her, so I bore her severity. Well, a great deal goes down before determination and good humour, and Miss Hickman's disapproval went down when we were called upon to do some little services together and she found that I was serious. Finally, we became friends, and I've been in and helped her in the afternoon, when I had time, for she has no auxiliary either. She let me assist in the dressings, and I have grown very fond of her ward. It is full of English Tommies, and unless you nurse them and help those English boys, you don't know what they are. They are too lovely and too fine for words. One perfectly fine young fellow has had his leg amputated at the thigh—his life ruined for ever. Another is blind, staring into the visions of his past—he will never have anything else to look at again. The chief amusement of these fellows seems to be watching the funerals, and they call me to run to the window to see the hearses covered with the Union Jack or the French flag, and they find nothing mournful in the processions. One Sunday afternoon, as I sat there, leaning against a table in the middle of the room, a few country

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

flowers in a vase near by—for Miss Hickman asks for country flowers for country lads—I asked them if they wouldn't sing me a song that I had heard a good deal about but had never heard sung. "What's that, nurse?" asked the boy without a leg. "Tipperary"—for I had never heard it. "Why, of course we will, won't we, lads?" and he said to his companion, only nineteen, from some English shire: "You hit the tune." And the boy "hit it," and they sang me "Tipperary." Before they had finished I had turned away and walked out into the corridor to hide the way it made me feel, and I heard it softly through the door as they finished: "It's a long way to Tipperary." I shall never hear it again without seeing the picture of that ward, the country flowers and the country lads, and hearing the measure of that marching tune. . . .

I have seen Mrs. Vanderbilt constantly. She seems to be ubiquitous. Wherever there's need, she is to be found—whether in the operating-room, the bandaging-room, or in one of the great wards where she has charge. I have found her everywhere, just at the right moment: calm, poised, dignified, capable and sweet. But none of this expresses the strength that she has been to the American Ambulance since its foundation—the heart and soul of its organisation; and her

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

personal gifts to it have been generous beyond words. I don't know what we shall do when she finally returns to America. She animates the whole place with her spirit and her soul. . . .

Miss B. S. Andrews.

NICE, December 19th, 1914.

MY DEAR BELLE,

I would like to tell you of the day before that on which I left Paris for Rome, and make it stand out for you, as it did for me, in its picturesque, its tenderness and its interest.

I had told them that I was going to Rome, and I could not go on with my hospital work, and made all my plans to leave in a day or two, knowing that as my place would be more than filled I could desert my post ; but just as I was about to take my leave one of the head nurses asked me if I would take charge of Ward 246, as the capable woman who had had charge of it since the opening of the hospital had succumbed to the long fatigue, and had contracted appendicitis from standing indefinitely for months, and from overwork, and was obliged to go. " There is neither orderly nor assistant nurse," she said, " and in that ward there are nine men, and you must do all the dressings." She seemed to take

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

it so for granted that I would not at that moment go back on the situation, that you can imagine for nothing in the world would I have refused, but as I followed her into Ward 246 and realised that I was at last alone before the situation, for which for months I had been preparing, I felt a not unnatural qualm.

Her confidence in me, and the fact that she would not have asked me if she had not been sure, for some unknown reason, that I was equal to the moment, gave me the necessary courage, and I accepted the wonderful opportunity with the same joy that I have accepted all these experiences from the beginning.

I found myself before the task of dressing alone the wounds of nine men, but the joy of being quite alone, and having no one to speak to me, to disturb me or to give me any orders, was so new and so delightful that it was a stimulus. The perfect organisation of the hospital, the quantity of material on hand, the well-filled closet, with all the necessities for the merciful work, were great helps, and in a short time I had installed on the middle table of my ward my little impromptu dispensary.

The first one I dressed was on the left of the Ward as I went in—a poor, touching English chap of about thirty years of age. His left leg was

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

amputated to the middle of the thigh, and I can assure you that when I undid those dressings and realised what was before me, I felt as serious as I ever have in my life. He held up his terrible stump, helping me as well as he could. Well, I finished that job, covering the appalling surface with the healing balsam salve we use so much in the Ambulance, and left him high and dry and comfortable.

The other men, with one exception, were out of bed, and one by one, when I had made myself and my materials ready, I asked them to come up to the table to be dressed. The first man had the back of his hand blown off and was wounded in the arm, and one had no fingers. The others were minor wounds, only demanding cleansing and rebandaging.

I was on duty at a quarter to eight, and by eleven o'clock I had tidied the ward, made nine beds, dressed the wounds of nine men—after giving them their breakfasts—taken all the temperatures, and just as I was about to sit down and catch a breath, the dinner hour arrived, and the serving had to begin all over again.

I was working in this Ward until the last moment, when I took the train for Rome, and I can assure you that when I turned my back on the Ambulance that night, leaving it all bathed round

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

in the red of a rarely beautiful winter sunset, it seemed as though I could not go, as though the very fibres of my life were engaged there in that merciful and touching work.

I do not speak of physical fatigue, for it is hardly interesting, excepting that the eyes swim and the hands tremble when you want them specially strong.

I remember that one night, I had been asked to a dinner at half-past eight, which I was especially anxious to attend. It was the first time that my sister-in-law (Mrs. John Van Vorst) and her new husband, Mr. Le Roux of the *Matin*, had been asked with me to dinner at the house of the Marquise de S., and I did want to go very much indeed.

During my work in the American Ambulance, I always lunched and dined, whenever I did so, in my hospital dress, just as I was, as there was never any time to make a toilet, and this time I had finished, as I thought, my duties and was just about to turn away, after saying good-night to my men, and to give up my Ward to the night nurse, when I looked over to the ninth bed, in which the latest comer was sitting upright, with an appealing expression on his pale, agreeable face. He was an ordinary soldier from the trenches, brought in late from one of the other Wards,

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

and I had supposed him ready for the night. I could not help but return to him for the second. I asked him with my heart almost failing, "Can I do anything for you?" "Well," he said, "I have not closed my eyes for two nights because my wounds are so dry. You would not look at them, would you?" When I took off his shirt I found he was bandaged from his groin almost to his armpits, and I knew that under those bandages would be a very serious proposition for me to face after twelve hours on duty. I went out to see if I could not find some one more responsible, but it just happened that there was no one, and how could I refuse to give what little skill and experience I had to this contingency? When I unbandaged the poor thing I found across his back two wounds, whose width and whose gaping mouths cried to Heaven. I think it took me about half an hour to wash them, to cleanse them and bind him up again. By that time my hands were trembling and my limbs were almost beyond my own control.

I remember driving to Cousin Lottie's, going in in my white clothes, and up that beautiful stairway to the peaceful salon, where she sat with her two guests on either side of her. They were all waiting for me, with such deep sympathy for the sons of France and England, for whom

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

I was caring as best as I could. All Cousin Lottie's dear ones were on the firing line, and she sat waiting for news. As for Le Roux, you know what his news has been! I could not have gone into a more sympathetic audience, but I had nothing to say to them. I was tired beyond words and they saw it, and excused me and I went home to bed, and to those heavy dreamless sleeps that mercifully come after great physical exhaustion.

In the heart of the night I awoke again and again, thinking of the pale-faced man, who unwillingly and timidly had asked me, at the last moment, to soothe those dry and crying wounds. What if I had not done my work well? What if some carelessness on my part had infected those pitiful slits. I could not sleep, and at seven in the grey cold of the early morning I went back to my Ward.

I want you to imagine my joy as I opened the door upon that place which I had grown to love. My soldier was sitting up in bed, his cheeks quite pink. He held out one of his hands to me as I crossed the floor, "Merci, merci, ma sœur," "I slept all night as I used to sleep when I was a boy and did not know what war was." You can imagine that I was repaid for the loss of a dinner party and the cost of a little fatigue.

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

Of course this is only one tiny incident, and so much more can be told better than I can tell it, and the stories have no end.

A vous de cœur,

M.

VILLA SAINT-ANGE, NICE, CIMIEZ, Dec. 9th, 1914.

DEAREST VIOLET,

It is a long time ago since you and I together saw the fronds of these wonderful palms cast their shadows over these sunny gardens. I have never been content or happy on this coast, as you remember. There has always been a spirit of depression here for me and an unrest. But coming down here this week, after four months of strain and excitement, there has been something peculiarly lovely in the abrupt change. The wonderful beauty of the place has appealed to me as never before.

This villa is nothing more or less than a palace, most beautifully furnished and all in the best of taste. I came down on the train with Mme. A., whose husband is shortly to be made Commandant, and we are alone here with the little girl, who is growing up intelligent and sweet, and it is a very agreeable *étape*.

On the train, Mme. A. told me her life. She was born of a peasant family in Burgundy, in the

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

simplest, poorest milieu. At sixteen, she came third class to Paris, with frs.100 in her pocket, and that's all she had in the world. An unknown girl, she took the first omnibus she saw in the streets, asked one of the passengers for the address of a simple little hotel, and went there alone to seek her fortune. Her first position was that of lingère in a little shop at frs.25 a month. To-day she is a millionaire ! She has a Paris house, a house at Saint-Cloud, a château on the Seine, and this villa at Nice, besides her *maison de commerce*. She married and had a son who died ; and you know the rest of her life.

It was like pulling teeth for me to leave France and Paris, where daily I was more and more interested, and if I had been sincerely needed, I don't think I would have gone. But the hospital is full of helpers, and efficient ones, and many of the women were leaving—all of them anxious to go to the front ; and that's where I wanted to go too. If I'd been a little more selfish and less considerate of my duty to Mother, I would have gone into Belgium with Ellen La Motte.

4, PLACE DU PALAIS, BOURBON, PARIS,
27th December, 1914.

DEAREST BELLE,

I cannot tell you how lovely Italy and Rome seemed to me going there, as I have

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

just done, from this war-ridden country. Even in this time, the trip was made without incident or delay, and I opened the windows of my parlour at the Bristol on streets flooded with sunlight as golden as in the month of June. There was the fountain playing, the streets filled with such brilliant flowers, and the flock of red-robed priests fluttering toward the Pincio. The fact that they were Austrians made me turn my eyes away, and I realized that I was no longer in a belligerent country. Golden and brown, golden and brown, the houses all around gave and reflected back the ardent light. There was something to me very reposeful in this country, the third I have visited since the war, and although my heart and sympathies are so strongly with the others, Italy was like a happy island at whose shores I for a time moored my ship.

In times of peace I could not have afforded such apartments as I had. There was nobody in the Bristol, and they gave me the best rooms in the house—gorgeous salon, bedroom and bath, a room for Webb, and another far down the hall where I could sleep out of the noise of the streets, all for a price so modest that it was not even to be taken into consideration.

We arrived at seven in the morning, on a Friday, but I could not feel the day unlucky,

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

there was something about it blessed, and the very streets seem to close in cordially around the Piazza Barbarini. Never have I liked Rome before. You know here, just around the corner, I almost laid down my life three years ago, and there under my windows another fountain played, and I heard its falling waters in my dreams of fever and unrest. Now it seemed to me almost as if I had come to take up the "vita nuova" I talked of then in delirium.

I bathed and went to bed to rest and sleep before sending out three letters, one to Mabel, one to G——, and my letter of introduction from Mr. Herrick to Mr. Page, the American Ambassador. I rested, but could not sleep; in the distance I could see stretching out the wonderful Campagna that surrounds Rome. I knew how the Pincio was warming there in the morning sunlight, and that amongst the little children with their nurses some sunny spot would find a little white bird of a baby, a motherless little bird, and I was longing to see her.

Toward noon Mabel came in; then there came a wonderful bunch of red and white roses, and when I came out from my bedroom Webb had already made the salon look like something of home.

Then there arrived a letter from the Ambassadress, asking me to tea, and I went and met at the

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

Embassy some new friends and some old. Think of it, how strange it should chance to be so! There was Mary Debillier, my friend of twenty-five years ago, whose friendship I made here in Italy, and with whom I have not been since. How strange to find her there! Then there was Beatrice Moore, Ellie's child, never seen but once since her babyhood. It seemed so singular that these old relations, both of them connected with so much tenderness and feeling, should be there in Rome.

From the moment that I arrived in Rome, until I left, I had one kindness after another extended to me. The Pages took me in with open arms. "The Woman Who Toils" is one of Mrs. Page's favourite books. . . .

Italy, though neutral in name, is full of war, and, to my joy, anything but neutral—perfectly mad for England, perfectly mad for France. The Germans go nowhere. Italy has over a million men mobilised and, my dear, such picturesque men! If one did not know how true the contrary is, it would seem as though they were preparing a game of war for an illustrated book! Brilliant soldier dresses—blues and reds, with lackadaisical plumes—debonnair soldiers, gay soldier boys and fine looking officers—the Italian sunlight, the blue, blue sky overhead.

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

. . . One cannot help but pray that the stern northern battlefields will not swallow up Italy's army in their dreary trenches.

I met Marion Crawford's first wife that same day, and she, too, took the trouble to tell me that "The Woman Who Toils" was one of Marion Crawford's favourite books. How kind people are! I never shall be known by anything but "The Woman Who Toils"; it seems to be universally known. That is because it is a human document, written from facts.

I dined and lunched at the Embassy whilst in Rome, and met the Spanish Ambassador, who was charming; and Mrs. Page took me to see Sir E. Rennell Rodd. I had a private interview with him and enjoyed it immensely. . . .

After a short ten days of beautiful skies, wonderful walks and drives, after a vision of the Campagna that I shall never forget, I packed a steamer trunk and came back to Paris, leaving my maid with my trunks to join me at Genoa.

Rome to Paris—two nights and a day—back again into this grey winter city at its Christmas-time, when war is written everywhere. Never had it seemed to me so precious and so deeply "home." I cannot tell you how sweet it was to me to go back into my little blue and white room, to see the crimsoning morning on Christmas Eve

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

red over the roofs where frost had laid a cover of white. This winter mist is peculiarly sympathetic here, and everything about Paris seemed more adorable to me than ever before.

This afternoon we are all going to tea with Gertrude Stein, the Cubist, the title of whose last book is "Tender Buttons"—if you know what that means.

I suppose you know that Miss Enid Yardel has been doing perfectly magnificent work. She has been the means of helping to support from five hundred to a thousand people in this dreadful crisis. And speaking of it all, let me tell you that I have not heard one complaint, not one, from ruined families and from those from whom all has been taken. The only mention that I have heard of money and poverty and denial is from rich Americans; they have spoken of their reduced incomes, and have complained, but here, there is not one sound. The other day I heard from one of my friends who has lost five sons and all her fortune. I heard from her because she is interested in a work of charity and wanted some advice. I mention these facts because they give one poise. Mrs. Bliss, of the Embassy, has been enormously generous. One of her gifts alone was over \$20,000, and I suppose she has given a great deal more. At any rate

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

she said : " I think that any American who comes out of this crisis with his income what it was before the war is an ' honte,' a disgrace. What have we done," she said, " to show we took part in what others are enduring—I mean to say, what have we done that has cost us anything at all ? "

Next week I leave for Nice, to go down and stay with Mother until I sail. It has not seemed real to me that if God spares me I shall see you again so soon—I have not believed it true. When I left you I felt that it was for ever, that I should never see you again—perhaps that is so, and yet, on the other hand, the probabilities are that a better future than that is in store, and with this idea I am letting myself begin to realize the fact that you are there on that other Continent alive and well, and that I shall have the inexpressible happiness of seeing you once more. Tremendous lessons have been set before me since June—I could not hope to say that I have learned them, it would be too much to say, would it not ? But I can at least say that I have read them through attentively and tried to take some of them to heart. I think we are all graver and that our natures must have deepened by the contemplation of the sufferings of others ; how great these sufferings have been ; the nobility and the grandeur of the little country that we as a country

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

have stood up and seen wiped out ; the industry and patience, the superb courage of the French ; the English response, the magnificent handling of the military question at sea and overseas by the British Empire ; the threatening of peaceful England, the touch of the invasion of those never before insulted or ravaged shores ; how grave it is, how great it is ! The graves that fill this land, the trenches piled thick and high with men who have died for an idea, because they were called, uncomplainingly ; that stern courageous Front set toward an enemy whom some of them never even saw. Innocent, simple-minded men brought from the desert, brought from the land of temples, and across thousands and thousands of miles to fight for an empire not even their own by blood, in a land that can never be theirs. If without complaint, without cowardice, simple people can so die, surely we of the more civilized lands, and with everything in our favour, should be able uncomplainingly to live ?

This will be my last letter from France. I know how anxious you will be to hear from me *viva voce*, something of what I have seen, but, you see, I have told it all to you far better than I can ever speak of it again.

Always yours devotedly,

M. V. V.

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

NEW YORK, Jan. 30th, 1915.

MY DEAR MOTHER,

I have just received a long letter from the Marquise de S., and it is so indicative of the spirit of the women of France at this moment that I don't think I can do better than quote it as it stands. I am sure you will be interested to read it.

"PARIS, 15 Jan., 1915.

"MY DEAR FRIEND,

"Thank you for your dear letter and for your gentle concern for my health and comfort.

"My life holds many difficulties and much that is inexpressibly painful to support; but a soldier's wife and a soldier's mother has a strong source from which to draw her courage.

"You kindly asked me how I spent Christmas and the first day of this New Year. The idea of Christmas, merry Christmas, was depressing. The clouds seemed dark and low and crushing, the atmosphere was heavy with doubt, pain and unshed tears. The streets were full of poor crippled soldiers in worn, ragged uniforms, but with bright faces, and there was no outward sunshine. But, dear friend, we women of France keep it in our hearts, close and warm beside our courage, our hope, our faith, our love. We mothers and wives

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

and sisters feel that the moral strength of our *soldats*, our officers, our dearest and best who are struggling and fighting, must come from us, and with our heart and soul we send them uplifting help by our firm belief in them, our pride in their courage, both moral and physical, our tender ever-present love which covers them like great wings of strength and protection, however dark or discouraging may be their condition. We make them feel sure that the ceaseless prayers that we offer to God for them will be answered ere long with Victory and peace and delicious reunion with those they love. And most of all they must never suspect that our hearts are sad and lonely and hungry, and life a burden because of their absence. So no matter how bitter our struggles, we must ever have the rays of warm, tender sunshine coming from our hearts to theirs. They watch for this, they need it, they live on it ; and we never fail them. When at first I was alone, I trembled, I was weary and lost without the strong, gentle young arm that had ever been beside me, and I wondered how I could live without it, when one day, about six weeks after my dear son had left me, I received a letter which said : ' Each day we go further and further away from you, I miss so terribly your strength. I can cheerfully endure all kinds of miseries and the

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

discomforts of a soldier's life, but my hands are always reaching out to you for strength and comfort of mind.' This was a revelation to me, so the little card had told me my path. I then made a vow with my heart that never would I look forward in *thought* to any evil that could come to the dear son—at least my moral force should be ready for any battle. Then I gave him to God, and have ever since kept a calm courage which I know has been a force to him, and has helped me keep my vibrating nerves under control.

" You are perhaps wondering what connection this has with your question about my Christmas. It is simply, dear lady, the prelude to tell you why I could endure the anguish, the utter loneliness of that day. In the afternoon of Christmas Eve, I went to a convent which has been transformed into an ambulance. I went to take the poor men cakes and sweets for their Christmas dinner. I knew the Mère Supérieure well, and she begged me to stay and have a little dinner with her, and then assist with a few others at the midnight Mass for the soldiers. I was delighted. All day the dread of that evening alone with my sweet sad souvenirs of those other joyous Christmas Eves had hung heavily over me. After a little meal, the good Mère took me into the ward

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

of the seriously sick soldiers. I spoke a little word to each, and then we went into the pretty, dark old chapel. A soft, dim, religious light pervaded the entire chapel, but after a moment our eyes were drawn towards the Altar, which was draped with flags and brilliantly illuminated by many flickering candles. On each side of the altar were grouped the soldiers (those who could walk) and the sisters, the nurses. The Messe was sung by them, and oh so heartily and religiously ! The soldiers had been learning the music for a week. Then came the Holy Communion, and every soldier partook of it. Many of them walked with difficulty, but they helped each other, and all had the Blessed Sacrament. There was great peace depicted on each face as they returned to their seats. When the Mass was finished, the priest walked to the door, followed by the soldiers. The Mère was awaiting them and gave to each a lighted candle, and then they commenced to sing and marched slowly into the ward of the seriously ill men. The priest stopped before the bed of each, said a little prayer, and gave each poor suffering soul the Holy Communion, the Bread of Life. The priest was followed by the soldiers, each with his candle, by whose dim light we saw the pale faces, weary and worn, but illuminated with the joy that they also might receive this

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

great consolation. After this beautiful ceremony was finished, and while we were still all kneeling, the priest gave the Benediction, and then slowly left the ward, the soldiers following, chanting. I can give you no idea of the wonderful beauty and solemnity of this service. We were all impressed by its 'perfect peace.' We hardly spoke on leaving the ward, but with a silent pressure of the hand we each one returned to his home feeling we had been very near the Mercy Seat of Christ.

"I had promised my dear son to go to the Communion at 9 o'clock, at the hour that he could receive it in his regiment; so I had little sleep, and when the day broke I went out in stillness and silence to meet the soul of my dear son waiting to find mine for our Holy Office. Need I tell you more of my Christmas? I forgot that I was old and alone, and only remembered that it was the fête of our Lord, who had come *ici-bas* to protect us all. Many dear hearts came to cheer me all the day. Pray, dear friend, that whatever may come, this peace may never forsake me.

"I send you our most affectionate souvenirs. My boy often asks for your news. . . .

"P.S.—This a.m. the sad news of the death of two nephews has come to me, and another who

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

left with his brothers, who are both killed, is a prisoner, poor dear, and they have cut off one of his legs. Only God knows our sufferings. "

NEW YORK, Feb. 1915.

DEAREST MOTHER,

It is impossible for us not to realize that the eyes and the attention of the Powers at war on the other side of the ocean are fixed and fastened upon us with intensity, with anxiety, and were at first so fixed with hope and belief. I speak of the French and English, the one speaking our own language, to whom we are neither foreigners nor aliens, with whom we are kin by race and speech, by ancestry and by tradition. The other whose friendship for us in the moment of our struggle for Independence is a thing that no American should forget.

These peoples have seen us from the beginning of this struggle manifest a certain ready generosity, such as the American people have never failed to display in crises and disasters, the unbuttoning of the general pocket to relieve suffering, the bigness of heart which evinces itself in the bigness of its donated sums.

This they have seen. They have felt the wave of protest mild indeed, compared to the gravity of the crimes. They have looked and waited,

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

expected and hoped, and I might say appealed, and this is all they have seen. The great American Republic, sealing her eyes to the dazzling horrors of the distant wars, has turned herself to her own affairs. From the very moment that the neutrality of Belgium was violated, from the moment the treaties regarding her welfare and security were insulted and trampled upon, the Germans offended every principle, outraged every ideal for which the United States stands. And further, the German's manner of entering into the kingdom of Belgium, their undoubted and undisputed acts of hideous brutality, crime, mutilation and slaughter have outraged, offended, and disgusted and horrified every humane and *truly American* citizen of the United States.

No general protest from us, from the millions of women who feel intensely and with all their hearts disapproval of Germany's war and her methods of warfare—no protestation from the citizens of this free and humanitarian Republic has gone forth. Had a general protest been launched at the very beginning, it is probable that the subsequent course of events would have been changed.

Of the ninety millions of citizens of the United States, are the Germans the most active, the most intense, the most alive, and the most vital ?

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

Is it possible that such a thing as this can be true? If this is not true, how can it be possible that the national voice, which the conflicting peoples have listened in vain to hear uplifted, when it speaks, speaks alone for commercial interests—can we say to satisfy the greed of a certain class?

That our commerce, that our industries should have free scope, that in no wise we should be either crippled or our prosperity imperilled is just and right, but at this crucial and delicate moment of the history of nations it behoves this great people to be extremely careful as to her methods and her modes of procedure. Americans have not hesitated to judge Germans: we must not hesitate to judge ourselves. In order to purchase a few interned vessels in the harbour, a purchase by which the Germans would be supplied with further means of carrying on their detested war, the forcing of an issue at this moment over the protests of England, over the protests of France, is like driving the very prow of the vessel of our State through the hearts and vitals of France and England.

We have been called the one nation in the world where public opinion cannot be stifled either by plutocracy or autocracy. It has been said of us that we are idealists, still one begins to

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

doubt it, and to fear for the materialism that is choking us, and to draw the likeness between this materialism and the qualities that the German Empire possesses, and which has made them offensive to us, and made their propaganda such a dangerous factor at this moment in the politics of our country.

To the Marquise de Sers, Paris.

NEW YORK, February 10th, 1915.

DEAREST FRIEND,

It seems so strange to be here again. I almost feel as though I had died and gone into another world! After all the excitement and emotion of the past few months, after such strain and such hard, impersonal work, it seems singular to be in a country where the War is not the chief interest. But I can't say that it is not a vital interest, even here.

At first, I was afraid to see people, for fear that they should feel differently to the way I feel. But I need have had no fear. They call America neutral—the Government calls it neutral: America is *not* neutral. I have not heard one voice that was not strongly for the Allies. Indeed, any one with pro-German sentiments is *persona*

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

non grata. They are not even invited to the houses where I go.

I found myself dazed when I landed. Even the fourteen days at sea—(I must tell you that on board was a group of newspaper correspondents, among them a man named Archibald. *He* was a pro-German, if you like! Some time, somewhere, I think the Kaiser must have looked at him or spoken to him, and from that moment Germany had him, heart and soul.)—Even the fourteen days at sea were not sufficient to separate me from the interests and the palpitation of the countries I have left. I won't say I can't settle down here; I am still dazed.

My rooms at the hotel were full of the most beautiful flowers, and it seemed so wonderful to have friends like these I find. I had forgotten, during these few months, personal relations and even friendly interchange of thought. . . .

I shall not be able to go out here as I used to. I am glad I only brought two dinner dresses. I doubt if I shall ever put them on. Before my eyes are still the spectacles of the wounded and the dying, as I have left them behind at the Ambulance. I cannot take life as a social thing, I am sure, whilst I am here.

The American women, as far as I can see, are doing all they can for the Allies. They are

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

knitting like mad, to begin with. Hundreds of thousands of garments have been sent across the seas. This you know, as you yourself are receiving them all the time. There's not an entertainment given that is not for the Russians, the Poles, the Belgians, the French Red Cross, the British Red Cross. Money seems to pour out in one general stream towards you all over there. I am glad—I am so glad. And as for the volunteer nurses and doctors, why, they'd embark for France and England in bands every week !

Here in my little sitting-room, I have the picture Mr. Herrick gave me of himself, and a picture of the Ambulance ; and I hark back to France with all my soul. . . .

As for you, I know that in your heart and mind is just one thought—the safety of that beloved son of yours ; and somehow, we all feel here that your love is so great and so enveloping, that your prayers are so constant and so full of faith, that he will be spared to you. We all feel it. We have all said it a thousand times.

I must tell you just a little touching thing. The other day, I came in late and went up to Mollie Andrews' room. She was dressing for the opera and stood there with her opera cloak thrown around her shoulders, looking radiantly lovely. I said to her :

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

“ Mollie, I’ve had some bad news.”

And before I could speak, the tears rushed to her eyes and she put out her hand and said :

“ Oh, don’t tell me that Captain Dadvisard is killed ! Don’t tell me that : I couldn’t bear to hear it ! ”

Well, of course I *hadn’t* heard that dreadful news, I am glad to say. It was something else, and I hastened to tell her so. I mention this to let you see how we all think of you and how deeply we take his safety to heart.

With my devoted love,

As ever,

M.

To Mrs. Theodore Haviland, Limoges.

NEW YORK, February 20th, 1915.

DEAREST JULIE,

I am sure that it would gladden the hearts of all you women over there, working as you are night and day over the wounded, if you could see the interest that the women here take in all that is going on across the sea.

I have not talked a great deal of my experiences, because they were so deep and so heart-rending that words are slow to come ; but when-

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

ever I have been willing to say anything at all about the scenes of grief and suffering, the sympathy and the tenderness expressed by our friends has been gratifying in the extreme. . . .

I know you will be glad to learn that "Big Tremaine" is one of the "best sellers," and they say that if it had not been war time, it would have gone up into the hundreds of thousands. Isn't that just too mean for words? . . .

I have been asked to meet the New York committee for the American Ambulance in Paris, and to say a few words about the hospital to the Board in Mrs. Whitney Warren's studio.

As I write, it is snowing hard, but the streets are ablaze with light. The brilliance of Broadway and Fifth Avenue came to me like a shock, after darkened Paris and London.

With much love to all,
As ever,
M.

NEW YORK, March, 1915.

MY DEAR MOTHER,

A well-known German writer recently referred to us as a purely commercial nation. We began by being New Englanders and Yankees. That we know sharp bargains and drive them is true, but we are also, and have always been,

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

idealists, and it has not yet been declared to us that the reasons for the present war, forced upon Europe by Germany, are not purely materialistic. We are also, as a nation, inclined to believe that it is not the purely materialistic things that triumph.

Germany is making us a pathetic appeal that her people may be nourished and fed. We are far from her, with her quarrels and her militarism. Militarism we, as a nation, repudiate. We have so far formed the public opinion that Germany has brought the war upon the world. Our ears are ringing with the cries of the Belgians and of the Poles, for whose famine and desolation Germany is responsible.

The American people want neither disturbances nor war. We are not inflammatory, nor quick to take issue, nor are we suddenly moved. We are a big body, and when we move the effect will be proportionate. Made up, as we are, of many peoples, our voice has a peculiar richness of tone ; we absorb many colours, and the composite hue is deep. We are a crucible into which the varied races have been poured, but the result—though our ingredients are conglomerate—will be found to be strikingly unified.

Our Press does not inflame, it reflects. Our public opinion is so strong that no Government

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

or course of events can drown the expressions of the American people.

We will protect our citizens and our commerce. Germany understands what it will mean to antagonize the United States. The question is one that reaches beyond this war time, that reaches into the future, and its results to all peoples. What happens now amongst us all will be difficult to forget. Let Germany in her attitude toward the United States be circumspect.

Every thinking German-American regards the present situation with the intensest interest, and many discover that the American Fatherland grips them acutely. If the German Emperor, according to an ancient boast of his, is ruler over — millions of Germans in the United States, let him look to how he commands and what he upholds.

The question is not one of arms and ships alone. It is a question of commerce, economics, and of the wealth and gain of nations. Every hour that we in America are thrown more completely upon ourselves for our manufactories and our industries, we are finding out the great importance we are to ourselves, and what our isolation means to our greater commercial self-sufficiency.

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

I don't think you half realize over there the splendid work done for the American Ambulance by certain women in New York. When the subject was broached of an American Ambulance in Paris, to be run by American citizens, the task of raising the funds was entrusted to Mrs. Bacon, wife of the former Ambassador. Mrs. Bacon and Mrs. Greenough together have raised nearly half a million dollars—just think of it!—by frankly asking people to give, and without any general appeal to the public. Both Mrs. Bacon and Mrs. Greenough have been indefatigable and marvellous in their concentrated efforts. There is no doubt that by Christmas, 1915, these women alone will have raised far over a million dollars for France.

To Mme. Hugues Le Roux, Paris.

NEW YORK, March 18th, 1915.

DEAREST BESSIE,

You can't imagine what an exciting thing has happened to me. I want you to give me your best wishes—I might almost say your prayers, for I shall need them. I am going to do the thing which almost all writers do at some period of their lives: speak in public. I won't say that I am terrified. It's far beyond that.

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

The other morning, I was sitting at half-past eight, taking a peaceful cup of tea with Belle in her little sitting-room—for we breakfast together—when some one called me on the telephone. (They begin here, you know, to call you on the telephone at any old hour. I've been waked at half-past seven; I've been called out of my bath many times. But you know what the American telephone is: it's an all-night and all-day job.) Well, the telephone rang and I ran to answer it with my teacup in my hand.

Mrs. Robert Bacon was at the other end and she said to me:

"I want you to speak for the American Ambulance before about eight hundred people next week. Will you?"

That doesn't sound like anything much, does it?

I drank two or three swallows of tea before I answered her, the receiver at my ear, and I felt like the Mad Hatter at "Alice in Wonderland's" tea-party—in a dressing-gown, with a teacup and saucer in my hand. I almost bit a piece out of the china. I was scared stiff.

"But I can't speak in public, my dear Mrs. Bacon. I've never done so in my life!"

"Yes, you can. You spoke at the committee meeting the other day; and you made us cry.

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

And if you can make us cry, you could move a New York audience. Will you ? ”

Now I want to tell you that this was the most stirring invitation I ever had in my life. I felt right then and there that I could do it ; and instantly, with the real conférencier’s spirit, I said :

“ But why eight hundred ? Can’t you get a thousand ? ”

And Mrs. Bacon laughed and said : “ We’ll do the best we can.”

Well, that’s all right on the telephone, my dear ; but I didn’t drink any more tea or finish my breakfast. And now the reality stares me in the face : that I’ve got to speak, that I don’t know how, and that I shall probably make a most dismal and terrible failure. But it’s for the American Ambulance, and I love it so much, and it’s a real cause and a great need. Every pulse in my body beats for France and England and I am going to try. This is Thursday : I am to speak on Tuesday. Wish me luck.

Devotedly yours,

M.

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

To Mrs. Van Vorst, Nice.

NEW YORK, March 20th, 1915.

DEAREST MOTHER,

I went to Hackensack to-day with the notes of my speech in my pocket and I hoped some of it in my head.

I went alone. Mollie Andrews had promised to come with me to give me courage, but at the very last moment she decided she was far too fond of me to go out and see me make a fool of myself! But I am glad after all I went alone.

Rolling out on the trolley, I grew somewhat composed, but by the time I reached Mary's house I was terrified beyond words and would have sold myself for twenty-five cents to any one who would have carried me out of the state of New Jersey!

It was too odd to see the rooms full of people who had come to hear me speak. It seemed so naïve of them, to gather themselves together and go in and sit down to hear *me*. Of course you understand what I mean! But that wasn't the worst of it. Every idea I had ever had in my life vanished away. At the proper time, however, I managed to get into the room from somewhere and to the little platform Mary had had built.

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

There were azaleas from her greenhouse on the platform, and, something that brought me back to my more normal state: *one of the old parlour chairs from my childhood's home*. When I was a little girl, I used to sit in it. There was something comforting in the sight of it. It's strange what parts inanimate things play in our lives.

But neither the azaleas nor the old chair from home could have given me the courage to speak in public! Fortunately, however, Mary had conceived a luminous idea. She had asked a man with a beautiful voice to sing the "Marseillaise" and "Tipperary," and he was singing when I came downstairs.

The notes of that song and the thought of what its music meant to us all in France inspired me. It carried me out of myself. The word "France," the marvellous tune, the thought that I should speak for France, and that even my modest offering might be of some use, gave me courage.

Well, I spoke, then, and Mother dear I wish you had been there. How wonderful that would have been, wouldn't it, to have seen your face among those faces. I watched Frederick's. He was in the front row. Of course you know that there could not be a more touching subject

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

at this moment than that of the wounded and dying soldiers in the hospitals. Many people wept, and after I'd finished they all crowded round me. I was unconscious of myself while I spoke, but afterwards I trembled so that I could hardly stand. Above all, I was *so glad* Frederick was pleased. It would have been *dreadful* to have failed in his house and in his town.

When I got back to the Devon, dear Mary called me up on the telephone. She said :

" Why, Hackensack's perfectly crazy about your speech ! People have been calling me up from all over the town to thank me for asking them, and a lot of others have been calling me up to know why I *didn't* ask them ! "

And I said : " Mary, do you think it was a success ? "

And she said : " Your brother says he's never heard anything like it in his life ! " . . .

(My dear Mother, you can take this for a compliment or not, just as you please. I felt pretty sure that he never *had* heard anything like it !)

Mary went on :

" But I'm awfully glad we didn't *sell* the tickets, because I don't think it would be good taste to make people pay to hear your sister speak."

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

And I told Mary that I quite agreed with her.

And this is only Saturday night, and New York (and Fifth Avenue) isn't Hackensack. But never mind! I hear the "Marseillaise" and I hear "Tipperary" ringing, ringing in my head.

God bless England! Vive la France!

Your devoted daughter,

M.

To Mme. Hugues Le Roux, Paris.

NEW YORK, March 24th, 1915.

DEAREST BESSIE,

I've always known that I had wonderful friends, but I never realised how splendid they all were before.

When I was down in Richmond once, in the old historic church there, I heard a negro grandfather say to his tiny little pickaninny grandchild, who stood by his side:

"Sonny, dis hyar am de spot whar Patrick Henry done make his Big Speech."

And the little nigger, with his eyes popping out of his head, asked:

"What did he-all say, gran'pa?"

"He said: 'Gimme liberty an' gimme death.'"

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

“ N’what did dey gin him, gran’pa ? ”

(That was a poser, but the old negro was equal to it !)

“ Why, dey gin ‘im *bofe*. ”

Well, when I made my “ Big Speech,” every one of my friends rallied round me in the most adorable way you ever knew. You see, it’s all very well to just toss it off and take it lightly, my dear Bessie ; but you can’t realise what a truly big thing it was in my life. You see, you don’t gather together some 500 representative New Yorkers—the best there are and the best we have—to bore them if you can help it. You must remember that New Yorkers are pretty well “ fed up ” with the best, and it’s no easy thing to hold their attention ! I knew this, and I realised that if I failed . . . ! It was the most serious moment, in a way, that I ever faced !

But, dear Bessie, I had the moment with me, if one may speak so. I had the most thrilling subject ; I had facts and experiences, and I *felt* and I *cared*. I had seen too, and I had suffered much, and for weeks I had been *forgetting about myself*. *That* was the best preparation.

Dear Bertha Rainey gave me a delightful lunch and invited all my best friends. I walked up to Mrs. Hammond’s house, however, alone again ; and realised with all my heart that I

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

didn't want to disappoint those who cared for me or Mrs. Bacon. I think I prayed. I was cold as ice.

Mrs. Hammond's beautiful ballroom was full, and after Brieux, who spoke for France, had ceased, then I took courage and spoke, calling to mind as well as I could all my pictures of the wonderful Ambulance.

Over on the right were the people, with the exception of you and Mother and Mme. de Sers, whom I love best in the world. Among the rest of the audience people who had known me all my life ; and many strangers, and people who hadn't seen me for years ; and people who had read my books, and who knew me by name ; and many who didn't know who I was.

Mary Van Vorst heard a funny thing just before I spoke. One woman said to another, when Brieux had finished speaking :

" Well, I guess this next won't be much. Let's go."

And the other said : " Oh no ; let's sit it out. It's about the soldiers, anyway."

And Mary told me that from then on, they never moved until I had finished, except to wipe away their tears. Wasn't that nice ?

But the wonderful thing was to see the faces of those people that I loved. I can never, never

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

forget it as long as I live. You see, they didn't know, of course, whether I would fail or not. How could they tell? It's so different when you know a person well. Nothing very much that they have to say astonishes you or carries you away. But to see them smile, to see them laugh, to see them weep, to watch the emotion that you yourself call forth on the faces of the people for whom you care and whom you know so well—why, it was (I think I may say) the most wonderful moment of my life.

I had the most touching subject in the world, in all the range of feeling: human sacrifice, heroism; what those wounded men endure, what they were, and the aspect of the nursing of the wounded. At any rate, even as I write to you about it now, I am cold all through. . . .

No one moved from the time I began to speak until I had ceased, except, as I said before, to wipe away their tears. And even when I finished, they didn't move. There was silence all over the room.

I don't know if you would call it a success. That word doesn't interest me very much. Mrs. Bacon told me afterwards that she had received a great deal of money, very generous cheques, after my speech. I only know that I can't thank her enough for letting me do this. Apart from

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

nursing at the bedsides of those wonderful men, nothing in my life has ever given me a deeper feeling of pleasure.

I know you will be glad to hear that it went off so well. I cabled you and Mother to-day.

As ever,
M.

May 13th, 1915.

DEAREST MOTHER,

I have let boat after boat go out without a letter to you, and on each one of these boats for weeks I have been intending to sail myself. At the last moment one after another of the people here, beginning with my brother Frederick, have begged and besought of me not to risk a life that seems to be precious to them, and I have, like a coward and like a traitor to duty, been weak. Of course, although the time seems very long, you must remember that I have said on each occasion, "It is only seven days more, and then I shall sail." Finally our choice was made for the *Lusitania*, and I can assure you that in spite of rumours no one had the slightest fear, but all the time I personally had a strange feeling of unwillingness to embark. You know that I had originally booked my passage on the *La Burgoyne*, and she went down; then on the

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

Minneswaska, and she went down. And I should have sailed on the *Lusitania* without any doubt had it not been that Molly Andrews was married on the Thursday, and in this way left her sister Belle entirely alone. I felt sorry for her sudden loneliness, and knew that she suffered a great deal, although she is very reserved. Remembering how I suffered regarding Violet, I thought I would stay *one more week*, just to be a little comfort to her, so on Thursday morning I went down and got back my passage money, very much to the dissatisfaction of the company, who urged me to go in a beautiful room that they had secured for me. I then went up to see Frederick, but I must say still with a great longing toward that comfortable vast ship. Frederick was absolutely decisive, and he himself sent the telegram saying that he forbade me to sail.

The *Philadelphia* went out the following week, and I was all ready to sail on her, but in the meantime those horrible brutes had sent the *Lusitania* to the bottom, and Thursday night again Frederick called me up and asked me, as a favour, not to sail: so did Bessie and so did her husband. What could I do? I feel that you are lying there frail and wretched, waiting for me, longing for me, and I cannot conceive of a more trying situation than yours, a situation, I am sure,

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

borne with the greatest sweetness and patience. It seems to me a long crucifixion that you have gone through these last months. I shall never be able to forget what you must have suffered and endured, and all the pleasure and success that I have had will be for ever clouded by the feeling that I have failed in my duty, and that I have caused you needless suffering and anxiety.

I have been afraid to sail now on account of the relations between America and Germany, and by the time you get this something will be definite. I feel too dreadfully, also, about Italy going to war, and nothing seems stable or certain. I am very nervous and very tired and excited, feeling I have been a coward and unworthy in considering myself above others. I am afraid there will be no blessing for me now.

Bessie has come at last to this hotel with her husband. She is having a wonderful time, most amusing and interesting, and is dined and sought after everywhere. She has written all the best part of her husband's articles that have gone to France, and has worded all the long cables. It is extraordinary how splendid her mind is, how equal she seems to the situations, and how she carries him along ; she is the force there. His lectures here have been very much liked ; he has been successful and delightful.

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

We are thinking of nothing but the situation caused by the *Lusitania* horror. Our President's calm waiting and his apparent unwillingness to force an issue, whilst no doubt best for the country, has filled a vast majority with impatience and something like fury in many people's hearts. I think he is wise and that he will handle the affair in the best way. Certainly the American people will stand nothing more from Germany. There has been a strong anti-Wilson party, but now they are more united, because his note to Germany expresses to them the idea that we will brook absolutely nothing from them further, and has shown our abhorrence of their deeds.

My friends telegraphed me and wrote me regarding the *Lusitania*, and everybody has been most sweet and kind. My heart is longing for France, for the activity and the usefulness and for you, and to my duties and tender interests there.

With deepest and tenderest love,
M.

To Mrs. Theodore Haviland, Limoges.

NEW YORK, May 20th, 1915.

DEAREST JULIE,

The deepest grief that the war has brought to me has just come to me now.

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

I went down to the Colony Club to a luncheon to-day, and as I went in, I saw, standing by the door, Mr. Bacon, an old friend of Cousin Lottie's. I said to him quite cheerfully :

“ Have you news from France ? How is Henry Dadvisard ? ”

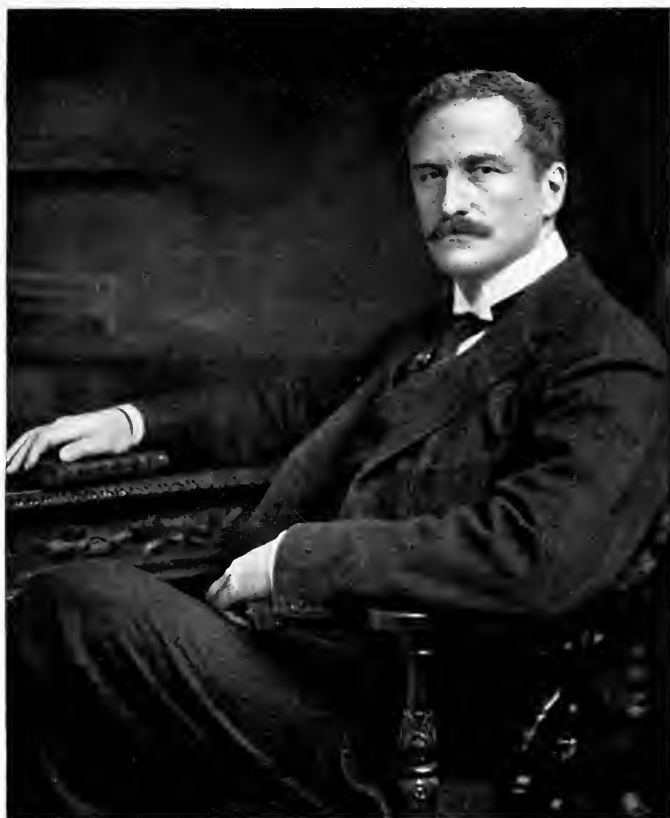
“ Henry Dadvisard ? Why, don't you know ? He has been killed. ”

Oh, it doesn't seem as though it could be true !

I don't know Mr. Bacon at all well, but I just seized his hand, and the tears poured down over my cheeks. It was so strange to hear it there like that, in that American club, so far away from my dear friend, whose anguish and grief I can't contemplate. It doesn't seem that it can be real. I know of no one more alive, more living ; I know no man with more brilliant promise ; and what this blow will be to cousin Lottie I dread to think.

I had not intended to sail for Europe for some time, but I shall go this week. Not that I can be of any comfort or any consolation ; but at least my presence and my tenderness will be there. I shall telegraph her to-day to say that I shall sail on Saturday.

With love to all,
As ever,
M.



THE HON. ROBERT BACON

Elliott & Fry



WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

To Miss B. S. Andrews, New York.

CLARGES STREET, LONDON, June 1st, 1915.

DEAREST BELLE,

You will think it strange, perhaps, when I say that I regret very much that you did not sail with me, in view of the danger of this strange crossing! . . . It was a curious sensation to find, as the days went on, and the danger (real or imaginary) grew and deepened, that one's attitude of mind adapted itself to circumstances and to fate. I can only speak for myself and judge as well as I may of the psychological state of the other passengers. When one is safely through an adventure, its colour grows dim and one is inclined to take oneself to task for ever seeing it in such vivid lights, but the vivid lights were there this time. . . .

Mr. Marconi had received in New York, the night before he sailed, warning not to sail, as well as an anonymous letter. We were, to put it mildly, on the *qui vive*. . . . It was quite on the cards that the Germans would fire across our bow, force us to stop, and demand that Mr. Marconi should be taken off. . . . But I never heard the slightest expression of fear or anxiety from any one excepting a little actress, who kept herself

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

up on gin and bromide, though from one end of the first-class cabins to the other, every soul on board was strained and tense. . . . All day Saturday—a divinely beautiful day—I scarcely left the deck, and remained there until five o'clock next morning. Part of the time I spent with a Mr. Trevelyan—the son of the famous historian—who has been to America to interest the United States in Serbia. He was a calm and agreeable companion. Together we leaned by the hour on the railing, watching one of the most beautiful moonrises I have ever seen, and I shall never forget the white and stainless possession of that May night on sea and sky. At any moment, in any second, we none of us knew but what we might be torpedoed.

Now I will tell you why we felt so insecure—given the fact that we were on a neutral ship. We received the news that another American boat, a freighter, had just been blown up. How were we to know whether or not that was an affront or an accident? How indeed! And then we also received a bit of news. (When I say “we,” I mean Marconi and the captain, and it filtered through to me through Mr. Trevelyan.) This was the destruction of a submarine just outside the bar. No notice has been subsequently taken of this, nor will be officially, and how were we to

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

know that a submarine was not lying in wait to impede our passage or to send us to the bottom of the sea ?

Picture the atmosphere of the ship, with every lifeboat swinging free. I should think there must have been twelve or thirteen, six or seven on each side, and five or six enormous life rafts all cut loose and ready, and we who remained upon the deck had our life preservers and lifebelts at our sides.

If you had gone into my cabin you would have seen in my berth one of the most beautiful little girls you ever set your eyes upon, for I induced her mother to bring her up from the bowels of the boat and put her to sleep in my bed. You cannot think how charming that little brunette with her rosy cheeks looked lying there asleep in my room.

Well, of course, with a highly imaginative temperament, I suppose that I looked at the possibilities in a more varied manner than many, but I give you my word that I was absolutely prepared, as I hope to Heaven I shall be when the real time comes. One doubtless never is, I could not experience the remotest feeling of fear. Indeed, far less than at other times in my life. It all seemed so immense, so calm, so transcendent ; all the things by which we

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

are all now surrounded are so appalling and so beyond thought to conceive, and naturally an individual life seems a very small matter indeed.

I cannot tell you how peculiar it seemed to be once again here in Clarges Street, where I have been so often, under such peculiar circumstances during my nomadic and changeful life. Nobody can grow very sentimental about this in the face of what lies not very far away.

There are things that strike me here as they always do in England : its beauty and the real wonder that London itself is. . . . I feel the same in France and otherwheres in this rich and marvellous old world. I do not like to say that *it seems too beautiful to last*. Much is so perfect that in the nature of things should be evanescent. How can beauty persist and remain ?

The streets are full of soldiers now. Last night in the theatre, where I went alone, I heard, by the way, the tune I love so much and which you said you would give me to play upon the Victor, "Michigan." I saw several wounded officers, men with legs and arms bandaged, listening with the rest of us to the rag-time tunes. Of course now, as not before, the intense seriousness of it all seems to be more thoroughly appreciated and felt, and we are waiting for the result

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

of the Note to Germany,* and its effect upon the United States.

To-morrow I am going to Windsor for the night, and on Sunday I shall go to France and take up there whatever falls to my lot and to my hand.

Yesterday as I went out late in the afternoon I met the same old Punch and Judy man with the little mongrel dog, and it all seemed to me so intensely charming, so intensely full of colour, and after my long months in America I find my sensitiveness keener to it than ever before.

They would have made a good shot, wouldn't they, in getting Marconi? But he has eluded them and gone down into Italy to give his brain and his talents to his people.

They tell us that on the outskirts of London last night there were Zeppelins, and Zeppelin fires in consequence, but very little is known of the details. My secretary in Paris treats the London Zeppelin raids very lightly, for she tells me that there they have daily visits from the German aeroplanes, and that the bombs fell just around the corner the other day, and no one was even frightened.

Ever yours,

M.

* The First American Note.

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

To Mme. Hugues Le Roux, New York.

CLARGES STREET, June 2nd, 1915.

MY DEAR BESSIE,

Is not Miss Wickersham perfectly charming? I never saw her before, and I lunched there to-day and found her unusually lovely. How gracious and good-looking she is!

The house was delightful, cool and sweet, and there was an atmosphere of waiting about it, as though the master were waiting to hear the news of some great victory that his shells have helped to bring about, or possibly even waiting for his wife to return from her nursing of the wounded. Of course they spoke of you with the warmest regard and admiration. You seem to have left the same impression with them that they made upon you. Mrs. Graham Murray was there for luncheon. She has charge of the bureau of inquiry for the wounded and missing at the Red Cross, and says that her heart is wrung from morning till night. I never heard anything more appalling and in a way more beautiful than her story of the sinking of the *Lusitania*. One of her friends, a woman, was among the saved. This lady and three others were clinging to an empty box in the sea. They all had on their life-preservers, and

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

one or two of them could swim a little. Among them was Miss Dorothy Braithwaite, of Canada, coming to Lady Drummond here in London. Both of Miss Braithwaite's sisters had been widowed on the same day, their husbands being killed in action, and when Miss Braithwaite heard of this she sailed immediately to come to her young widowed sisters.

She was a beautiful girl, not more than twenty, and very frail. When the seas broke over the box, all four of them were obliged to let go and try blindly to find it again when they could. At length Miss Braithwaite grew paler and paler and finally the girl said, "I am afraid I cannot hold on much longer. Please don't any one help me, else we will all be lost." Her friend said that she smiled quite calmly, and they all four said a little prayer together, and the girl said, "Tell Lady Drummond that I died bravely and did not suffer, and cable the same to my mother." Then she let go. Her friend said that a few moments afterwards she saw the lovely little body float past her, and that Miss Braithwaite lay with both her hands peacefully clasped upon her breast like a lily on the water.

I wish this could be told just as I heard it. It would not take many more incidents like this to make us go into the war.

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

I saw Mr. Page. He was very agreeable, and he spoke of you. I told him you were doing some splendid work at home, and he said, "Of course she would, we expect it of her." I am now going down to Windsor to stay the night with Bridget, coming up to-morrow to go to see the Pages in the afternoon and dine at Sir Robert's. On Friday I shall go down to see Lady Northcliffe, at Guildford, where she is nursing wounded soldiers, and will write you of that experience.

Last night I went with Mr. Lane to the first night of "Armageddon," a new play by Stephen Phillips. It opened in Hell, then flashed on to Rheims, where the invading host were asphyxiated by French shells, then into a room in a château which was being devastated by the Germans. There were *en suite* an English garden, a scene in Berlin, and a scene in Cologne, and the play ended up in Hell.

I am going to arrange to stay a day with Lady Hadfield en route for Paris at her Field Hospital in Boulogne.

Mother writes that Madame de S. is desolate and, as you foresaw, will not speak of her son. Madame de Bresson is with her, I believe. Only two more women for whom the future is absolutely black and desperate. I dare not presage what is before us Americans, whether

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

or not we shall be plunged into this dreadful war and thereafter be decidedly more of a nation than ever, or whether we are to remain at peace. At all events I am taking advantage of one of the secretaries from the Embassy to send my letters now, and I hope you will take every possible means of communicating with me. Everybody here to whom I have spoken seems eager to have America join the war, and some of them think it will materially shorten this terrible struggle. If this is true, I hope we will come in. And there will be undoubtedly a great spiritual benefit to us from it, even if we have to drain the bitter cup that these people are draining here. . . .

To Mrs. Victor Morawetz, New York.

LONDON, June 3rd, 1915.

DEAREST VIOLET,

I cannot tell you how I miss you all. It would not be possible to say how I regret that we do not all live in the same country. Indeed, when I think about it, I do not want to live anywhere, for it is all too heart-rending and too nerve-racking—these separations and these adjustments of life without a compass. It is very interesting, however, and I suppose that that is something when you think of the women on

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

far-off farms who from sunrise to sunset see nothing but cows and the incomings and outgoings of the hired men—not to speak of their husbands ! . . .

Certainly everybody is not meant for marriage. Here is Countess —, for instance, *happy for the first time in her life*, nursing wounded in a military hospital, whilst in order to keep her husband peaceful and satisfied, she has imported a beautiful cousin from the United States ! . . .

I cannot tell you how I love this beautiful city. Every time I come back to it it has new charm. Here in this very street in 1891, I sat in one of these impersonal rooms with Adèle, idly turning over the leaves of a book of Rossetti's poems. I had never read Rossetti—never. He was new to me. She introduced me to him. I remember so distinctly even the day and how beautiful Adèle was, and how ardently interested. She said to me, " Why don't you write something here ? " And on the fly-leaf of that book I wrote a piece of verse which I sent to *Scribner's Magazine*. It was, in short, the first thing of mine ever published. And you remember how I have told you that it was received with interest.

London charmed me then, and down this self-same street at night-time would come that man with his remarkable voice singing :

" I'll sing thee songs of Araby."

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

I was young then and full of ambition and interest, and even then, my dear, how singularly alone I was. With no one to direct me or guide me, or command me, and only the influence of chance acquaintances upon me.

My next keen recollection is when I came here at one melancholy Christmas time, after my brother's death, and learned by cable from America that every cent of money I had then in the world had gone. And I knew then from henceforth that I had to face life at first hand. I bore that here alone, in a London fog, where later the sun rose up like a great big orange lantern over St. James's Park.

Then again I remember London when in a little room under the eaves I stayed here for a few days with the MS. of my first novel in my trunk. I remember the excitement of those times, going from one publisher to another, and that feeling of oneness with the mass, and I realised what Dickens meant when in "Bleak House" the poor clerk said to Joe, the street sweeper, "I am as poor as you are, Joe, and I can't give you anything, my lad," for I had nothing then, and you can't have less than that!

It was Christmas time. Ladysmith was besieged, and all London was plunged in the profoundest gloom. I remember the crowds

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

around the War Office. It was war time then, and such a fly speck on the page of history compared to now.

I never shall forget my excitement in selling that first book, and how in tune I felt with the whole world of English writers ; unknown and unimportant as I was, I felt so close to all those who had written English in this home of English letters, and London spoke to me then in every street, in every park, in all its great, mysterious charm.

I won't return to my coming here last year in August, before England went to war, because you know too well all it meant to me then, and here I am once more.

I am sure it will amuse you to know that my maid, in the kindness of her heart, unpacked my Victor and installed it here, so that when I am very lonely I can play the tunes I like to hear ; but some of them I cannot play, for they make me sad. I do hope with all my heart, dearest girl, that you will like the things I have chosen. Of course I have seen some beautiful antiquities, but I hardly dared send them from here ; besides, I have no money to do so.

When you get this letter you will probably be still awaiting the German response to the American Note, driving around the beautiful

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

country and leading your serene and lovely life. Do not forget me, that is, remember something of me that you can remember with pleasure, and try not to dwell upon my unsatisfactoriness and all my shortcomings. It makes too long a story.

Ever yours,

M.

To Mrs. Victor Morawetz, New York.

CLARGES STREET, June 4th, 1915.

MY DEAR,

When I am at home with you all, seeing the kind of lives you lead, and the immunity that you all have from everything that is really trying and difficult and, I might almost say, serious, I realise then as I do now a certain futility in entering into discussions and in trying to solve moral, psychological and sentimental problems. Nevertheless, these problems are all there in human hearts. They are things that cause the deepest anguish, they are also the things that when properly met, cause souls to rise to their greatest heights. If it is possible for you to do so, I wish you would try to put yourself for a moment in my place. Those eight days of loneliness on board ship facing what the course of other events must prove to be a *possible danger* at least, returning here to a country where the preceding

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

months have added daily to its anguish, to its grave questions, and looking forward to grappling with new and old problems has made me more grave and more serious in my point of view than I have ever been before.

One thing is certain : I am not willing to go on for the rest of my existence in the constant society of myself, unless I can make that society at least agreeable and at least have it under my control. . . .

I went the other night to stay in Windsor Forest with Bridget. There she has been ever since the beginning of the war, just with her little children and her painting and her Belgian refugees. She was sweet and lovely, and I enjoyed supper in her little house, with the children at another tiny table, and Lady K. and two beautiful English girls who adore their mother, so that it was the prettiest thing I ever saw. It gave you a perfect glow of happiness to see such love between mother and daughters. Bridget has great talent. We took a motor after dinner and took Lady K. home and Bridget drove. And there we got stuck in a country village in the dead of night with a whole regiment of Welsh soldiers round us. Even the police had all they could do to keep the men from hanging on to our car and paying us compliments ! We



MRS. BENJAMIN GUINNESS

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

finally made a raid upon a garage and got patched up and went plunking along through deserted roads home. . . .

To Miss B. S. Andrews, New York.

CLARGES STREET, June 5th, 1915.

DEAREST BELLE,

You will think it strange that I have lingered on here for a week, and yet, business aside, I am reluctant to go over and take up my life. It is not a question of indecision this time, it is lingering on a threshold, always a sympathetic one, and which now I feel I leave for an indefinite period to go into what is both known and unknown. Well, I must go, and I leave to-morrow on what is now a twelve-hours' trans-Channel journey, for instead of seven hours to Paris it is twelve, and even that is doing pretty well. There is an enormous lot of red tape about passports, but nothing like so much as there was, nor with the luggage either, for that matter, and the boats run regularly twice a day.

Each day I grow gladder and gladder so far of this lonely experience and of all it has meant to me, psychologically, mentally, and morally. I can see how in every way I needed it, and that

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

is a great deal. I remember a very beautiful verse in the Bible which says: "In patience possess ye your souls:" and I have often thought that the possession of one's soul was a very wonderful thing and a very necessary one. Of course, it was probably in order to do this that in the days of old saints used to go off for periods into the wilderness alone. It is not a very agreeable thing, this coming face to face with one's own personality, as we all have to do from time to time. I suppose it is salutary, and therefore good, and for many of us absolutely indispensable.

Last night I went to the English version of "Watch your Step." The thing that interested me, for the show was nothing at all, was the officers and soldiers in their uniforms, crowds of them. It was very touching to me to see these young men absorbed and amused by this light vaudeville affair. I do not know how many of them had been to the front or were going or what they knew of it, but you would have thought that England was only playing at war to have seen their careless expressions and their gaiety. I sat scarcely able to laugh at the comedy on the stage. I could hardly look at their khaki and at their accoutrements without seeing them as they were carried in on a hospital stretcher, or taken off in the ambulance. Of course having been a

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

nurse does not make me so abnormal that I cannot also think of the glorious part of it, but it is very hard in these days of active fighting to reconcile a lot of soldiers at a vaudeville show, laughing and splitting their sides, with what we know of war across the Channel.

The house was so crowded that I had the last seat. All the music halls are going well I think. Last night we had another Zeppelin raid, and my hairdresser says she was up all night and out in the streets in her night-dress, and part of the street she lives in was destroyed by fire. Now this is not told in the papers. London does not know and the German spies here are being kept in ignorance. Several airships have been over the town, or rather the distant quarters of the town, within the last few days.

I know you will be interested to hear that in the last few days I have probably placed my war letters with John Lane. It seems "Big Tremain" sold fairly well here—considering the times, very well—so that is better news than I had before about it.

After the play last night I walked home at twelve o'clock from Leicester Square to my lodgings quite alone through these dimly-lit streets, and when I came in I sat here smoking and thinking until long after one, and in the

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

interval I wrote the enclosed. What do you think of it ?

The shops are full of war paraphernalia. How they make your heart twist, to think where those military beds will lie and how all those objects gotten up with so much science, taste, and care will be strewn on foreign fields, and if they do come home again what marks they will bear !

There is not one thing about the whole ensemble that is not picturesque, romantic, and with elements of beauty in it. Uniforms, accoutrements, all that goes with the big military game has so much colour. And the Scotch soldiers in their plaids, you cannot think how stunning they are, and too picturesque to be true. You cannot believe your eyes when you see these very things before your face suggestive of song and story and fiction, and romance, and it is almost impossible to believe that any of it has anything to do with the grim, stern horror of blood and smoke and death.

Ever yours,
M.

To Miss B. S. Andrews, New York.

PARIS, June 7th, 1915.

. . . I must tell you about an agreeable interview with John Lane, the celebrated publisher.

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

I went to see him in his little old-time office in Vigo Street. It is hard to believe that such things exist unchanged, in these modern days, in the heart of a big city. There, in the room where he received me, the *Saturday Review* was born and lived for very many years. There, in the same room, Macaulay wrote part of the *History of England*. I struck a knocker instead of pushing an electric bell as I entered. . . . I had given Mr. Lane my War Letters to read, and I believe one of his readers was favourable : he hadn't heard from the other one. I imagine, though Mr. Lane did not tell me so, that the first criticism was fair.

You have often accused me of being vain, and it will amuse you vastly to imagine the blow when, after gazing at me for a few minutes, John Lane, one of the most important publishers in the world, asked me in his gentle voice : " Did you ever write anything before ? " Even in that moment of fallen pride, I could not help thinking what a gleam of humour would come to your eyes if you could have seen me taken down like that. I did not tell him that I had written twenty books and done not badly at the job in a financial way for fourteen years ! I asked him humbly : " Do you really mean to tell me, Mr. Lane, that you have never heard

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

of any of my books? " He thought that Bessie Le Roux was " Marie Van Vorst " and that it was a *nom de guerre*, and that she had married a French writer, and that I was just an unknown sister who had written a few letters home during the war! . . . I thoroughly enjoyed meeting Mr. Lane, who was charming.

Best love,

MARIE.

To Mrs. F. B. Van Vorst, Hackensack, N.J.

PARIS, June 8th, 1915.

DEAR MARY,

I came away from London at half-past eight on Sunday morning to attempt my fifth Channel crossing since the war began, and I came alone, leaving my maid to go down to Gloucester to see her people. The boat was crowded with soldiers and officers.

England seemed far more serious and awake than when I left, and to appreciate the situation to the fullest, as far as I could see. Of course they asked themselves and me every minute what America was going to do, and one was pretty safe in feeling that the first question a person would put to you when they met you was just that: " What is America going to do? " I'll be switched if I could tell them or make any kind of a satisfactory answer. It is all too

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

dulling and strange, and ever since I have touched the shores here, I seem to feel with the utmost intensity the presence of those struggling, contending masses all along those far-flung lines, east and west. The whole world seems a hecatomb, a *honey-comb* of destruction.

I don't know what news you have of the Zeppelin raids on London, but they were serious to the extent of destroying several houses and some lives. Even the latest vanity bag has a changed aspect now, and in it are sold little "tampons" of wadding, chemically prepared to clap over the mouth as a preventive against the fumes. You can get all kinds of war insurances and risk insurances. I don't doubt that you could buy an insurance against marriage or a temptation to it, or anything you liked! They say that when the war is over polygamy will be winked at; so there will be a chance for every one. I dare say that a lot of forlorn spinsters will feel that even war has its compensations!

Ever yours,
M.

To Miss B. S. Andrews, New York.

PARIS, June 9th, 1915.

DEAREST BELLE,

I left London reluctantly. My week there, in those desolate lodgings, interested me,

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

although I was so lonely that it weighed upon me like a cloud. Here, on arriving, the contrast was great between the shore I left and the shore I found. The motor ambulances at Boulogne were thick—rows and rows of them were lined up along the railroad quays, and many military motors, just driven down from the front, were covered with the dust of the road. I had thought of going to Lady Hadfield's base hospital at Boulogne, but decided to come straight through to Paris, which I did. I arrived at 7 o'clock, to be met by no one, as the train was an hour and a half too early, and I got all my luggage through alone, took a Gare du Nord omnibus, and piled on my cases with the wool and grapefruit and the Victrola I bought myself in New York. Even if everybody goes to war, and stocks go down, and nobody buys my stories, I can sit in an attic room and listen to the old tunes!

I am sitting here in my study this afternoon, and in front of me is the big war map, where unfortunately the line does not seem to have been pushed back as far as we want it; and I really think that it is the first peaceful moment I have had since I arrived. . . . I am going to change this room, and so I look around upon it now with affection. The memories of this little study have made it peculiarly dear to me and peculiarly

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

sacred, and I hate to give it up. Nevertheless, perhaps something more meaningful will make the new study dearer yet. I hope so. Here I wrote "Fairfax and His Pride," which I still think my best novel, without any doubt. Here I wrote the most effective part of "The Successful Wife," which I think will some day be reprinted and sold. Here I wrote my "River" articles—every one of them, with one exception. (I only mention the more important things.) Out of this window, how often you and I have watched the illuminations for the Fourteenth of July, in the heat of summer; and how often heard the ringing of the old clock, marking happy hours; and how often seen the moon rise over the opposite roofs! And now the Place below is dark at night and the lamps, like muted violins, are softened by their heavy iron shades.

I think with especial pleasure of the writing of "*Big Tremaine*" here, and the beginning of "*Mary Moreland*"—an entire short story, written one January, when, as usual, I was alone. That was a very interesting month—one of the most delightful I ever spent in my life—alone as I was; and I shall always look back upon it with peculiar pleasure. I read Dante, with Miss Casabianca, for the first time in my life; and I wrote a great deal of "*Tremaine*." There was a

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

charm in those undisturbed days and a mental utility ; and later in the spring, under the strongest inspiration for work I have ever had in my life—and by far the most delightful—I wrote the close of "*Big Tremaine*," the most successful book I ever wrote.

Perhaps it will not bore you to read these reminiscences. I have always wanted to linger over them and bring them agreeably forth ; and I am sure your eye will fall kindly upon them and that you will read them with sympathy. . . .

I do not want to change my study, nor even write this letter, without marking its tribute to you. I think you will understand the dedication of "*Mary Moreland*" ; and also that you realise that I can never forget your entrance and advent here, as you used to come, day after day, evening after evening, expected and unexpected, and open the study door and disturb my work ; and cross the Place, expected and unexpected, turning the corner of the Rue de Bourgogne and waving up to me a white-gloved hand. How many times I have stood here and watched you come and watched you go, in the yellow motor that now is driving to and fro in Paris with a Red Cross flag flying from it, at the behest of the French Government ! The motor always came too soon then, whenever it came ; and I can see

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

now how you used to put up the curtain of the back window and wave to me again. It would not be fair not to say what an impulse your friendship and companionship gave during all those months to all I did and was. I do not dwell upon my debt to you, for I think you must know. . . . Now, in returning to this almost deserted city, where the boulevards are like country streets, where cabs and taxis are sparse in comparison with the crowded old days ; where, in spite of courage and cheer, the place seems sad and changed—here there is no one to come and either inspire or disturb. So why not, since any change is good, they say—why not change the study ?

Ever yours, dear,

M.

To Mrs. Morawetz.

June 13th, 1915.

DEAR VIOLET,

The night I came home, I sent my luggage to the house by the bus and took a taxi and came along later. Everything was in apple-pie order ; I can't tell you how sweet it all looked. Among my ornaments, here and there, were scattered Belle and Mollie's things from the Hotel du Rhin, and it gave me pleasure to see them there.

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

I want to mention especially the beauty and grace of the flowers everywhere—sweet peas and a frail, delicate little white flower, a sort of meadow-sweet, very ethereal and lovely, and all arranged with great taste and charm. They were wonderfully appealing to me, for some reason or other, after that long strain of the sea and the return—these frail, beautiful things, which although speechless, were living. I shall remember them always.

Word met me here that I was not to go to my mother, as she was too tired to see me at that time of night ; and as you can imagine, I could not go to bed, or even remain at rest. So I took a taxi and drove immediately to Madame de S. Many times, when I have gone there, I have driven up just behind the taxi of Henry Dadvisard and seen him spring out and go in, gaily, quickly, with the energy and vitality which characterised him, in his bright uniform of the Cuirassiers, with his high boots and jingling spurs. How often have I seen him there ! He seemed an integral part of the place. Now I realised that he would never come there any more—never—and that all he meant of strength and manly courage and life was gone for ever. Wasted ? Spilled ? Lost ? Dispersed ? Who can say ? Qui vive ? Oh, how devoutly I pray that we

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

may be able to answer: "La France—quand-même"! . . . For some reason or other, I was not loth to go in, because I know my friend so well, her courage and her great soul and her great heart; but it was with very deep feeling that I mounted those stairs, my dear—past the clock marking the eternal hours, the clock that on that first of August night had marked his coming and whose sightless face had seen him go out of the door for ever. Over and over again, I have mounted those stairs, Mme. de S. between Henry and myself, going up slowly, leaning on him—all three of us gaily talking, as we went to the salon after dinner. From henceforth she goes up them and on into life more completely alone than ever. . . . I found her sitting, as I have found her sitting countless times, in the dimly lighted room, her knitting in her hands, and close to her knee the Vicomtesse de Bresson, pale as death, in her deep widow's weeds, her eyes full of unshed tears, knitting too for the soldiers. . . . Well, I shall never forget it. Both women were perfectly quiet and perfectly controlled, and we sat talking together about general things for an hour and no personalities were mentioned; but Mme. de Bresson's face was a tragedy.

The Vicomte de Bresson, though a brilliant soldier, hated war. He was an eminently peaceful

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

man, born and bred to the soldier's profession, with a high commission which he had filled for years. He had resigned from the Army because he hated army life and war ; but the moment that war was declared he volunteered and led a whole brigade. Advantage was taken, I believe, of his very unusual courage, because it seems that the orders given him were to perform a feat which he himself knew was impossible, and he said so. He said to his superior officer : " On ne peut pas le faire. J'irai, mais la tâche est impossible." So he went, and he fell in the enemies' lines, and there lay two days, his soldiers being able to see the body from a little eminence. Can you vaguely think what that means to a woman, to know that her husband lay upon a battlefield, in the enemy's lines, and that his body, under the circumstances, could be a prey to whatever mutilations those horrible creatures chose to practice—for they *do* ! That's all that Anna knows—that's all. . . .

With Henry Dadvisard the case is quite different. Of his own accord, he left the cavalry and joined the infantry and went into the most dangerous part of the fight. Five captains had been killed successively, and he was the sixth. Mme. de S. says—and I assure you that the way she told it to me that night was one of the most beautiful things I ever heard in my life—



VICOMTE EDGAR DE BRESSON

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

she says that for days before his letters to her had been extraordinarily spiritual, and that she knew that little by little he was detaching himself from life. He seemed to have left it all, and its interests completely behind. It is a great grief to her to feel that he was surrounded, those last days, not by his own regiment, in which he was adored, but by comparative strangers. She believes that the day he went out, he knew he was going out to die. The ground was full of holes torn up by the shells, and the sortie which he had been ordered to make was full of the most dreadful danger. They say he led his charge brilliantly, springing like a flame from place to place, where he could find a foothold. Finally, he led his men on his hands and knees, as it was unsafe to stand erect ; and he was kneeling on one knee, with his sword raised, when he was shot through the heart. He was picked up by his men and carried away, and she has the joy of knowing that he was buried in a private vault in some little cemetery. That joy is hers. . . . She told me that she was sitting in her bedroom quietly at her desk—she hadn't heard from him for several days—and the mail was brought to her. She had given him some envelopes in her own handwriting, addressed to herself and stamped, in which a slip was to be put if he were wounded

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

—she never dared think of anything else—and one of these came to her. Well, it was a shock, but she tore it open, without dreaming what its news might be, and there she read the calm announcement from a priest that he was dead. She told me that it was days before she shed a tear, and she went on calmly about her affairs, telling his family, as she was the only one who knew anything about it. But she never speaks of him, and the fact that she could tell me all this was a very great tribute to our love and friendship. . . . I can't imagine him dead. He was one of the most vital and brilliant men I ever knew, and he was only one of many of the flower of France that have been cut down in this hellish harvest.

Yesterday I went into Rollet's to buy a few caramels to take to Mother, and that handsome young blonde girl that used to wait on us served me. I noticed that she was in black and I hardly dared to ask her, but she said her husband—and stopped, holding the box of caramels in her hand. She was perfectly beautiful as she stood there—one of the prettiest women, I think, I have ever seen—with that pallor that comes to those that have watched with the greatest grief, and those quiet courageous, pathetic eyes of women who control their tears because they are

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

the wives of soldiers. "Only twenty-seven, madame," she said, "and such a lovely boy." And then she said with the deepest feeling. "It simply means that I shall mourn all my life." She has a little son; so has Anna de Bresson; and the children must be a great consolation. You see it everywhere—the same, and yet eternally different, as each woman bears her peculiar burden.

I think I have written you all my news and up to the present everything that has impressed me.

I went up to the American Ambulance to-day (Tuesday). It is very beautiful and more luxurious and more like a picture-book than ever. Mrs. Munroe, who has stood on her feet, with I don't believe much respite, for ten months, has a varicose vein and is now doing her work lying in an invalid's chair. And Vera Arkwright is assistant to Dr. Blake and doing, I believe, magnificent work.

Best love,
M.

Madame Le Roux, New York.

PARIS, June 15th, 1915.

DEAR BESSIE,

Coming down to-day from the Arc de Triomphe home, I counted 36 women in widow's

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

weeds, and then stopped, as it made me too sad to go on. With two exceptions, they were all very young; several had little children with them, and most of them were pretty. One of the popular posters is la République sowing from her apron with a full hand into the furrows of the land. Many springs will have to come, and many summers, and many harvests, before France can fill her lists again.

The son of the concierge is back for seven days. He was injured, by a grenade explosion, in the liver; but in spite of that injury and his six weeks in the hospital, he is sun-browned and a *man*. He went away a puny little clerk from the "Samaritaine"; he has come back a strong, sturdy soldier. Those who come back will have learnt much, will have broadened and deepened and strengthened; but the streets are full of mutilated and maimed men, of sightless and disfigured men, witnesses to the horrible sequence of war.

Lady K. told such a beautiful thing, out at Bridget's, that I forgot to tell you before. She said that it was bruited in England that there had been a miracle wrought when von Kluck's army so unexpectedly turned back from Paris, which without doubt they could have taken. She said that it was rumoured—and not

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

only in the ranks, but among higher men—that there appeared in the sky a singular phenomenon, and that the German prisoners bore witness that a cavalcade like heavenly archers suddenly filled the heavens and shot down upon the Germans a rain of deadly darts. As you know, this was long before the use of any asphyxiating gas or turpinité; but on the field were found hundreds of Germans, stone dead, immovable, who had fallen without any apparent cause. You remember the armies of the old Scriptures that “the breath of the Lord withered away.”

Lady K. said that the rumour that the woods of Compiègne were full of troops when the Germans made that famous retreat was absolutely untrue. There were no troops in the forest, and what they saw were, again, celestial soldiers.

No doubt these tales come always in the history of war. But, my dear, how beautiful they are—how much more heavenly and inspired than the beatings on the slavish backs of the German Uhlans, of the half-drunken, brutish hordes! Everywhere is the same uplifting spirit. When I speak of Paris being sad, it *is*; but it is not depressing. There is a difference. If it were not for the absence of those I love, I would rather be here than anywhere. In church on Sunday, the Bishop said that at one of the services near

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

the firing line, when he asked the question : " How many of the men here have felt, since they came out, a stirring in their hearts, an awakening of the spirit ? " as far as he could see, every hand was raised. And men have gone home to England, without arms and without legs, maimed for life, and have been heard to say that in spite of their material anguish they regretted nothing, for they had found their souls.

Well, it's impossible, with stories such as these, to think of anything but ultimate victory on our side. Contrast it with the German spirit, with the hymns of hate, with the yellings and screamings of that press, calling for more *Lusitanias*, calling for the wreck of the *Orduna*, demanding more innocent sacrifice. Take the faces of Joffre and the other generals and put them alongside von Hindenburg and the Crown Prince. . . .

The French Army has now got its new uniform. It is called *bleu d'horizon*. It is a light, delicate blue, the colour of Faith, the colour of the sky that is so beautiful in tone over France always ; and its advantage is that after nightfall not one man can be seen at 150 yards. This is the only army of which that can be said. There is something particularly agreeable to me in the thought of that blue army—the colour of the Sacred Maid. I ought to tell you that all

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

credulous and believing France thinks that the country is being saved by Jeanne d'Arc. You hear them say it everywhere. Just think of it, in the twentieth century, my dear, when the war is being fought in the air and under the sea, by machines so modern that only the latest invention can triumph! Think of it, and then consider that there remains enough of spiritual faith to believe that the salvation of a country comes through prayer.

Yesterday I wrote for some time and rough-hewed a plan for "Carmichel," up to the very last chapter. I hope that it will be helpful.

Extraordinary things happen in war time. The wife of one of the officers of General F.'s *état major* was allowed to visit him at the front occasionally. On one of these occasions, one of her husband's fellow officers said to her: "Ah, madame, how I wish I had a wife or at least a sweetheart—some one that I could write to and who would take an interest in me!"—"Well, why don't you get engaged?" the lady asked.—"I don't know any one to get engaged to!"—"What sort of a girl would you like to marry?" asked Mme. B—— sympathetically.—"Well," replied the officer, "she should be tall, a brunette, intelligent, and a Dreyfusarde."—"I know the very girl!" exclaimed the lady; "she's a friend

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

of mine and I shall bring her photo to show you next time I come." She kept her word and the young officer was enchanted with the picture and promptly fell in love with the girl it represented. The latter, on the other hand, had heard all about the forlorn officer from her friend and conceived a great interest in him. They began a correspondence. Everything went beautifully, and after a time Captain — asked the General for two days' leave to go to Paris and get engaged! The young people had never previously set eyes on each other; but they both fell madly in love when they met and the formal betrothal took place, after which the happy officer returned to his duties at the front!

To Mr. F. B. Van Vorst, Hackensack, N.J.

PARIS, June 17th, 1915.

MY DEAR FREDERICK,

In regard to the trophies of war of which you speak, I bought for you yesterday a German sword from the field of battle, a German helmet, a German cartridge case, and a German service cap. Of course, Allies' things would be difficult to find. These are all picturesque. I am going to make you a little collection of

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

souvenirs and send them over to you by express. Paris is full of pretty "documents" of the war. The big powder manufacturer, Mr. Dupont of the South, has a cousin here—one of the nurses at the Ambulance—and she has bought for him a thousand dollars' worth of trophies; but you can imagine that he wanted shells, ammunition, and so forth. I forgot to say that this little group included a "Soixante-quinze," exploded—very pretty. You can put it in the drawing-room as an ornament. Also some bits of obus, of which you can make paper weights—all in the \$20. I am sorry they are German.

It may interest you to know that the other evening Mrs. Waddington—the niece of the famous Mrs. Waddington—spent the evening with me at Madame de S.'s. She had just been to the front to see her husband, who is a Colonel and a very brilliant officer. He had sent for her to come, as he had a day's leave. Think of it—she had not seen him since the 2nd of August! How she ran to him, figuratively speaking! He is in the most dangerous part of the front. The French soldiers are not given the leave that the English are, as you know. There are almost no home-comings. Few of these women have been able to see their husbands, unless they are wounded. When she got there, after rather a

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

perilous essay, this big bronzed soldier came to meet her at the railway station, and he only had an hour. Think of it! She told us about it so quietly and so bravely, her delicate pale face—for she is a great invalid—illuminated by the patriotism and the courage they all show. She had no complaint to make; she was glad of that precious hour. She said that coming back in the train a strange officer, who had a slight wound and was being sent to Paris with despatches—a perfect stranger to her—sat down by her side. He said: “Pardon, madame; vous m’excuserez si je vous parle? Je n’ai pas échangé un mot avec une femme depuis le jour de la mobilisation—pas un mot!” He had not been one single day away from his service since August. She said that he talked all the three hours to Paris—feverishly, eagerly; so glad to be human once again: and although she had never seen him before, she felt as though she had known him always by the time they got to the station. And at the end of their little trip together, he gave her a little aluminium ring that his soldiers had made in the trenches out of a bit of shell casing. He said that they grow perfectly reckless of danger in those long hours and days of trench life, and that he has to punish his men for getting up out of the trenches and walking right into the

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

fire to pick up a bit of metal with which to work to while away the tedious hours.

One of the touching things that Madame de S. said to me about her adopted son who was killed in April was: "I am sure he knew that he was going to his death that day. I feel so sensible of his great soul-loneliness on the eve of that terrible battle, when I am certain he felt that he was to lay down his life." He was one of the most courageous and brilliant officers—a born warrior and soldier, and one of the hardest workers I ever knew. It seems that the night before the engagement, he came into his General's quarters on the plea of looking at one of the maps, and the General told Madame de S. that as he went out he lingered on the threshold, and the General said to him: "Bonne chance! mon enfant." And the General said to her: "I know that he did not come to look at the map. He came to make a silent farewell." Of course, it is peculiarly touching to a woman who loved him to feel that what he wanted was the human sympathy, the human touch, as he was going out into the unknown. The field kodaks that she has of him, which she showed me last night, show him so changed, so aged and weary after those long hard months of service, that I personally would hardly have known him.

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

Many touching little things have been found in the memorandum book that Henry carried always, and the following little lines he had written there the night before he was killed. His pen stopped with the last words—

“ I offer with all my heart to God the sacrifice of my life for my beloved country and for the protection of those I love, in order to repair by my personal sacrifice any ill I may ever have done to my neighbour. I thank without ceasing every one who has ever been good to me ; I pray for them in going, and I in turn beseech them to pray for me.”

My dear brother, I make these quotations because they give you a little idea of the heart and soul and character of the best of young France. It speaks well for a country that she can nurture sons like this. . . .

That's all. Best love, dear, dear Frederick.

Your devoted sister,

M.

To Mrs. Louis Stoddard, N.Y.

June 25th, 1915.

MY DEAR MOLLY,

Mme. de S. told me last night that once during the last year she had a little spray of blossoms that had been blessed by the Pope,

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

and in writing to Henry on the field, she sent him a little bit of green—a tiny leaf pinned on a loving letter. When she looked through the uniform sent back to her, a few days ago, in his pocket was this little card, all stained with his blood. This card, with her few loving words, was all he carried on him into that sacred field. I must not forget the belt he wore around him, which she had made with her own hands, and it contained some money and in one of the folds of the chamois was a prayer that she had written out for him. The paper was so worn with reading and unfolding and folding that it was like something used by the years.

All the night before he went to that great battle, he spent in prayer. His aide told Mme. de S. that he had not closed his eyes. They say that if he could have been taken immediately from the field, he would have been saved, for he bled to death.

I only suppose that you will be interested in these details because they mark the going out of such a brilliant life, and it is the intimate story of one soldier who has laid down his life, after months and months of fighting and self-abnegation and loneliness, on that distant field.

From the time he left her in August until his death, he had never seen any of his family—not

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

a soul. I want to tell you the way she said good-bye to him, for I never knew it until last night. She had expected him to lunch—imagine!—and received the news by telephone that he was leaving his “quartier” in an hour. She rushed there to see the Cuirassiers, mounted, in their service uniform, the helmets all covered with khaki, clattering out of the yard. She sat in the motor and he came out to her, all ready to go; and they said good-bye, there in the motor, he sitting by her side, holding her hands. She said he looked then like the dead—so grave. You know he was a soldier, passionately devoted to his career. He had made all the African campaign and had an illustrious record. She says he asked her for her blessing and she lightly touched the helmet covered with khaki and gave it him. And neither shed a tear. And he kissed her good-bye. She never saw him again. . . .

She said that his General told her as follows: “The night before the engagement, Henry Dadvisard came into my miserable little shack on the field. He said to me: ‘*Mon général*, just show me on the map where the Germans are.’ A map was hanging on the wall and I indicated with my finger: ‘*Les Allemands sont là, mon enfant*.’ And Dadvisard said: ‘Why, is that all there is to do—just to go out and attack

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

them there? Why, we'll be coming back as gaily as if it were from the races!' He turned to go, saying: 'Au revoir, mon général.' But at the door he paused, and I looked up and saw him and he said: '*Adieu*, mon général.' And then I saw in his eyes a singular look, something like an appeal from one human soul to another, for a word, a touch, before going out to that sacrifice. I did not dare to say anything but what I did say: 'Bon courage, mon enfant; bonne chance!' And he went. . . ."

After telling me this, Mme. de S. took out his watch, which she carries with her now—a gold watch, with his crest upon it—the one he had carried through all his campaigns, with the soldier's rough chain hanging from it. It had stopped at half-past ten; as he had wound it the night before, the watch had gone on after his heart had ceased to beat. . . .

The day before Henry left his own company of Cuirassiers to go into the dangerous and terrible experiences of the trenches, to take up that duty which ended in his laying down his life, he gathered his men together and bade them good-bye. Last night dear Mme. de S. showed me his soldier's note-book, in which he had written the few words that he meant to say to his men. I begged her to let me have them: I give them to you. This

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

address stands to me as one of the most beautiful things I have ever read.

General Foch paid him a fine tribute when he mentioned him in despatches, and this mention of him was accompanied by the bestowal of the Croix de Guerre.

“ Henry Dadvisard, warm hearted and vibrant ; a remarkable leader of men. He asked to be transferred to the infantry, in order to offer more fully to his country his admirable military talents. He fell gloriously on the 27th April, leading an attack at the head of his company.”

To Mme. Hugues le Roux, N.Y.

PARIS, June 30th, 1915.

DEAREST BESSIE,

I am sure that to-morrow I shall have a real letter from you. You must be enjoying that wonderful country to the full, and glad that you are there at last, aren't you ?

It is hard for me to remember what I have told in the different letters, and I run the risk of repeating.

I went the other night to see “ La Princesse Georges,” at the Français. It is hard to realise that such acting and pieces are still going on.

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

The house was crowded, I am glad to say, for the poor Sociétaires' sake.

You said once, during the spring, before you came over, that whether or not I was lonely, I should enjoy the beauty of Paris. I have never seen anything more marvellous than it has been—almost deserted, really. Sometimes I walk in streets where there is literally no one ; and, of course, at night, as I often return at half-past ten or eleven, it is like walking through a deserted village—and such darkness ! Coming out of the theatre, I walked home from the Français, and I never saw anything so wonderful as that night. The moon was full ; the only lights lit were here and there one, then another ; and Paris was as it must have been centuries ago, left in all its beauty to the night alone. I leaned on the bridge and saw the shadows of the bridges and the reflections of the houses immovable in the calm water of the Seine, and overhead such a divine sky.

I went to call on Mrs. Walter Gay, and found her in her lovely room on the garden. She was very cordial. Last summer the Germans were within fifteen miles of her chateau. They buried everything of value in the garden, and with a few inhabitants of the village, who dared to remain, Mrs. Gay and her husband stood by their possessions, because, as she said : “ I would not leave

the few villagers who had remained." Of course, as you know, the miracle of the Marne took place, and the *détour* was made.

I found the *Matin* letter to-day (Monday), with its news from Harvard, thrilling and beautifully put. Julie writes: "How closely the *Matin* keeps us in touch with America!" I need scarcely say that it's the first thing I read—that letter from you and home.

If the girls and Violet have shared with you what I have written them, you are *au courant* with all the tragedy of Henry Dadvisard.

Isn't it charming that they call the soldiers' new uniform "bleu d'horizon"?

I am very glad that when Robert went to England he made some of the real spirit of England felt when he came back and wrote for the *Matin*. I don't think it has been properly noted, the amount of ammunition that England has sent to Serbia, Italy, everywhere; and if England has continued her commerce, it's fortunate that she has, isn't it? considering that she has supplied boots and clothing to France, and boots and clothing to Serbia, and that the output of the English factories to the countries at war has been perfectly tremendous. It is absolutely sickening to me to think that France and England, fighting together for the civilization of the world, should

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

not mutually appreciate and value each other as they ought. I am sure that it is all this petty jealousy—you know what I think about jealousy, anyway—the jealousies of us all—that has created what is going on.

To-day I went—supposedly—to see Gausset operate at the Val de Grâce, at the back of the Pantheon—the big military hospital. Gausset was at the front, and the *infirmière* who showed me about was a friend of Miss Chaptal's, and knew me and you—Mme. Fernande, awfully sweet and pretty.

I have been in the throes of trying to decide whether or not to take the apartment downstairs and throw it into this, or to take the empty one on the fourth floor at No. 6, a nice house, clean concierges, lift, and so forth and so on. You need not come in on this. I am wearing myself to the bone with the pros and cons, and *pours* and *contres* ; and I shall probably end by doing as I have for ten years—grub along here. But it's pretty nice grubbing. I never saw anything as sweet as the little place is to-day ; it grows mellow and mellow, and dirtier and dirtier ! The painter has suggested asking frs.500 for painting the *escalier de service*. This is what I should call " war paint " !

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

To Mrs. Morawetz, New York.

PARIS, June 22nd, 1915.

DEAREST VIOLET,

I went out the other day with Madame Marie to Versailles, *en auto*. I wanted to see the little hospital that Anne Morgan and Bessie Marbury have given out there. One of their pretty little houses is in the charge of some gentle-faced sisters of charity, and out in the garden, with the roses blooming and the sweet-scented hay being raked in great piles, were sitting a lieutenant, convalescing, and his *commandant*, who had come to see him, also wounded. Both men wore the Legion of Honour on their breasts. They were talking about the campaign. The lieutenant wore his *képi* well down over his face; he was totally blind for ever, at thirty! His interest in talking to his superior officer was so great that you can fancy I only stopped a second to speak to him. There were great scars on his hands and his face and neck were scarred too. I heard him say, as I turned to walk away: "J'aime aussi causer des jours quand nous étions collégiens à Saint-Cyr. Ces souvenirs sont plus doux." It was terribly touching.

I had an interesting letter from Madelon. She says: "We are on the Ypres Road, five miles

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

from Ypres. The country is marvellous, and it seems awful that it is all being destroyed by those fiendish shells. Every once in so often they make hash of the scenery, and the guns are always banging, and the sky is all lit up with the magnesium flares. I have got no one to keep me company. Things were awfully slack for a while, and we thought there would not be any more fighting this way ; but it's on again now, and we are busy day and night. We sleep on the haystacks with the rats and the bats. A cow carried off my sheets, but somebody—God knows who—sent me a tent, and I sleep down by a branch of the Yser, cows grazing at my feet, and shells screaming over my head. . . .”

To Miss Anna Lusk, N.Y.

4, PLACE DU PALAIS BOURBON,
PARIS, June 22nd, 1915.

DEAREST ANNA,

I have not answered your sweet letter or thanked you for your welcoming cable, but I do so now for both very sincerely.

I have only been once or twice to the Ambulance since I came back—this time as a visitor ; and I am more and more impressed with the organisation. You cannot think what good has

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

been done there, or how the devotion of the women who have stayed there since the beginning has impressed me, who only remained eight weeks. Mrs. Munroe has varicose veins in her legs from standing so much, and finally had to go down to Limoges for treatment, but she is back. The work done there in the operating-rooms is marvellous. An English nurse was telling me last night that she had never in all her life dreamed of such miracles of surgery. Harvey Cushing is among the operators, as you know, from Harvard, and she told me one special incident of interest. A general had been there who, when viewing the field through his field-glasses, was struck by a bullet which drove the glass of his lorgnon right through his eye, back into his brain. Imagine the disfigurement of that man, and think of his having lived! Cushing opened the back of his head and took out tin and glass, and goodness knows what not, and except that he is blind in one eye, that general is as good as ever, and loud in his praises of the surgery.

Madame de S. told me yesterday of a young boy whom she knows, who enlisted, at fourteen, in his own father's regiment. He has been twice taken prisoner, and the last time was sentenced by the Germans to be shot as a spy—at fourteen! The little fellow tried to escape,

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

but was caught ; but the German soldier who was sent out to execute him told the boy that if he had twenty francs on him he would let him go. The little boy did happen to have frs.20, which he gave to his executioner, and he is now here in Paris, under his mother's wing. Mme. de S. knows him well, and has talked with him. Isn't it amusing ?

One of the trained nurses here—notably one who had been at Mrs. Thayer's house in Boston, when I spoke for the Ambulance, and who offered her services that week for the soldiers, told me that she had one man in her ward to save whose arm the doctors and nurses of that special part of the hospital had struggled since October. His sufferings have been terrible, poor thing, and the other day they had to amputate it after all. It was done by the surgeon of the Harvard Unit, and Miss Giles helped him. She said that he and she and the other nurses too cried, and weren't ashamed of it, when they took off that arm at last. Nobody was willing to tell his wife, who came often to see her husband. Finally, Miss Giles volunteered, and she went to tell the poor little woman that her husband had only one arm. Instead of greeting her, as she expected that she would, with tears, the little woman, with a radiant smile, exclaimed : “ Oh, he's

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN
all mine now ! The war will never have him
again ! ”

To Miss B. S. Andrews, New York.

PARIS, July 12th, 1915.

DEAREST BELLE,

Mme. de S. is going next week on the cruel and dreadful mission of disinterring her beloved dead. She is going down into the tomb in Belgium—if she can get through—to take her boy out of the charnel house, where he is buried under six other coffins. “God has his soul,” she says ; “I only ask his body” . . . if she can find it. She has told no one of her griefs, but to me ; and she bears herself like a woman of twenty-five, gallantly—interested more keenly in everything that concerns me to the smallest degree than, I may say, any friend I have ever known ; for even in this time of anguish, she has taken infinite pains for me, in every little detail. I shall never forget it.

The weather is too glorious for words—a succession of charming, balmy, sun-filled and breeze-lifted days ; with the most wonderful skies. You have seen them in Watteau, and in the landscapes of the eighteenth century ; and we see

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

them every day ! As I look out of my window, there is nothing but beauty to see—the exquisite lines of the Palais Bourbon, and of the old houses, with the glimpses of waving trees above them ; and one after another over us pass these divine midsummer nights, when across the stars passes the star of an aeroplane and the night's mystery is enhanced. I never wake but I get up and go to my window, and I open it at different hours—at dawn sometimes, at midnight others—in the flushing or the paling sky, or in the mystery of midnight.

So many voices have spoken to me this time, and strangely enough, my tempestuous heart has listened to them all. It seems that this dreadful ban of lonely complaint has been lifted from me. I suppose we can learn to endure everything, or else we are brought to see it differently ; but I have found friends in the very solitude itself. If I do not say I have grown to love it, it is only because I don't want to love a lonely, selfish existence. There is very great beauty now in my life. I have never said this before, but just now I feel it. There are activities all around this unshared oasis. I have what you once called my "sacred work," and it is very precious. Poor as it is and unimportant as it is, it brings into play activities that love to be

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

exercised, and I have enjoyed it hugely. There is a fascination in the fact that nobody can say to me: "Do this or do that. Come here or Go there." That I can shut my doors and be alone. If I wanted to open them, there is no one to come; and that is not fascinating at all!

Mrs. Munroe asked me to take a little interest in the electrical treatment at the hospital. As it is given in a room all by itself, downstairs, far from the madding phantasmagoria of wounds and operations, and pretty nurses and fascinating auxiliaries—not to speak of the orderlies and the doctors—the poor little job has fallen to the ground. Nobody wants to go in and sit down all alone and give electrical treatment; so one by one the infirmières have given out. I went there at eight o'clock the day before yesterday. I don't think I ever saw anything more touching than the useless members that were brought to me for the stimulating effect—if it could stimulate—of that little electric tampon. Those arms, once so vigorous and so useful. . . .

"Qu'étiez-vous de votre métier, mon ami?"

"J'étais dans les bâtiments, madame."

A house-builder—building, constructing, making for civilisation and happy homes! From shoulder to elbow ran two great red healed scars. They looked like the railroad tracks, deep laid,

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

marking where the train of a shell had passed. From the elbow down to the vigorous hand, everything was paralysed. The man was a splendid fellow. He has a wife and two children, and he worries himself sick because the woman is ill and the children are delicate. No longer "dans les bâtimens," he has been eight months at the Ambulance, wearing out his soul. Looking down at his hand, he said to me : " Pourvu que ça marche, madame, un de ces jours ! "

There is one gay officer of twenty-nine, and six feet two. I don't think you'd speak of " little insignificant Frenchmen " if you could see him ! He's superb. One finger off on the left hand, and the right hand utterly useless. So we work at that for fifteen minutes, and all the little group of soldiers linger, because they love him so—he's so killing, so witty, so gay. He screams in mock agony, and laughs and makes the most outrageous jokes ; and when he has gone, one of them says to me : " Il est adoré par ses hommes, madame ; il est si courageux." The spirit between men and officers is so beautiful in the French army. They are all brothers. None of that lordly, arrogant oppression of the Germans. One of the soldiers said to me : " Il n'y a pas de grade, maintenant, madame. Nous sommes tous des hommes qui aiment le pays."

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

And Lieutenant —, of whom I have just been speaking. I said to him ; " Tell me something about the campaign, monsieur." And he answered : " Oh, madame, I would like to tell you about the *men*. They're superb. I have never seen anything like it. I had to lead a charge with 156 men into what we all believed was certain death. Why," he said, " they went like schoolboys—shouting, laughing, pushing each other up the parapet. . . . We came back nine strong," he said.

I immensely enjoyed seeing Mrs. Bacon and seeing Mr. Bacon's enthusiasm. It's wonderful to have such Americans living. I wish that a whole band of American women could forget everything in the world but the French and their need, and that they would come over here and work in the fields and help bring in the harvest, if nothing else.

The head of the ambulance cars at the hospital yesterday told me that there would soon be a great need for ambulance drivers and men, as the heat of the summer grows greater, and the tired ones go home.

Dr. Blake has been magnificent. His operations are something beyond words. Men came in to me for treatment and told me that he worked



DR. JOSEPH BLAKE

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

actual miracles with faces that were blown off, building new jaws, and oh, Heavens! I don't know what not.

Ellen La Motte went to the front at Dunkerque and the town where they were staying was bombarded. The shells fell all about them, and they were shut up and not allowed to go out for fourteen hours. They sat playing cards and eating chocolates, not knowing whether at any moment, right in their midst, an explosion would not end their life. She said she was frightened to death, and it was perfectly horrible. If they'd been working on the field, I suppose it would have been different.

I was sitting here the other day when my dear friend Victor Ballet, now docteur-major, came in. He has just dined with me and spent the evening, and I have enjoyed him enormously. He says—and I really suppose that you might at least take his word for it—that the French dead number 400,000, and that the Germans have *hors de combat*, since the beginning of the war, 4 million men.

A friend of Miss La Motte's—an American woman here—has just received word from Berlin through Switzerland, from a woman in a high official position in Berlin, that if she values her life she should leave Paris immediately. It's awfully

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

consoling, isn't it? This letter must have taken at least ten days to reach her, and at the time it was written things were not looking as well as they do now.

No more at present.

Ever yours,

M.

To Mrs. Morawetz.

PARIS, July 14th, 1915.

DEAREST VIOLET,

The world is so callous and so indifferent, and over here we feel very bitterly at times the indifference of America to the causes at stake. I can see it at the Ambulance, as expressed by those who have just come from America. As long as their pockets are bulging and they're making money, Americans can be slaughtered on the seas, and France can fight for her beauty and her soul, and it's all the same to the majority at home. Thank God there are Americans still that don't feel that way; but, as always, the élite are few.

It is sweet of you to say you miss me. I am very glad that you do think of me sometimes, only the past is so vague and dim compared with your busy, absorbed present, with your house and its interests, and your travelling and the new

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

people, that it's like looking into a camera obscura and seeing a picture whose tones are soft—not vivid enough to create very much impression.

This is the fourteenth of July. You remember how many, many times we've seen it come and go here together. This morning I was in the street before eight, going up to the Ambulance. I stopped to see mother, and greet her. Then I left a note at Cousin Lottie's, and then went on to the hospital. I must tell you about my electric work there.

The first day I took it on, the machine didn't go, and no one in the place seemed to understand anything about it. After having walked three or four miles, and escaped detection, I looked on the plaque of the machine and found out where it was made—Paris, fortunately, or I should have been tramping still! I wrapped it up in brown paper, took it in my arms, coralled one of the hospital ambulance motors, and went to the factory, at the back of the Observatory. The thing was put in order in no time. Moreover, they explained it to me, and taught me its intricacies, and then I fetched it home. All the following day I encountered people who kept saying to me: "It's too bad there isn't any electric treatment, isn't it? The machine doesn't work." I smiled, for I hid it under a mattress

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

when I left, so that nobody should make it *not work* in my absence, if I could help it !

I didn't expect to like this department, but I do like it awfully. I am all alone at the bottom of the hospital, in a room screened off by itself. Back of me they are making plaster casts for pitiful limbs. A little further on, a locksmith hammers and bangs all day long ; but somehow, I don't hear him. And there ten to sixteen men come to me every day, and I work from a little after eight till twelve. Then I go to one or two in the wards. I have come to the conclusion that all work is fascinating, for one after another, as I take up different activities, each has its charm.

Did I tell you that after Mrs. Vanderbilt left, Mrs. George Munroe took her place, and is really directress of the American Ambulance now ? She has been perfectly wonderful. I don't think there are any words too strong to speak in praise of her. I surely feel it so, and I know that France will echo this. Since the day the hospital opened, in August, until to-day, she has had no holiday. From early morning until night, and sometimes all night long, Mrs. Munroe has been on duty—nursing, directing, overseeing. Her health has been very much impaired and broken, and who can wonder ? She came into the hospital looking like



MRS. WILLIAM K. VANDERBILT (ON RIGHT) AND MRS. GEORGE MUNROE AT THE AMERICAN AMBULANCE, NEWLY

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

a rose, and now she looks like a lily. It is a beautiful thing to feel that she has given so completely all her forces and vitality to serve her adopted country.

On Sunday I went out to Mrs. Whitney's hospital at Juilly. There she is taking care of 256 wounded men. Mother's one-time companion, Miss Hansen, has a ward with 25 men, and she has no auxiliary !

The hospital was once an old college, part of it dating from the twelfth century ; and the piping, in some instances, had to be carried through walls twelve feet thick ! There is a beautiful garden, with swans sailing about on the ponds ; and it's a great sight altogether to see what the enterprise and generosity of one woman has done. As far as I can judge, the organisation is admirable. Dr. and Mrs. Brewer are at the head, with a fine Columbia contingent. Personally, I should think that every woman to whom France has given so much all these years would do something now to prove their unselfish devotion. We were much touched by Mrs. Bacon's coming, and it gave a great deal of courage to every one. She is a brick, and I like her awfully.

After lunch, Miss Methley and I went to the battlefield of the Marne. You call it a battlefield, but now, in the generous course of time, on all

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

sides has grown up the season's grain. There are the rye and barley and wheat harvests, green and yellow, abundant and beautiful, their tide stemmed only here and there by white crosses and black crosses, as the soldiers' graves shine out amid the grain. Oh, the spiritual lesson here is so great !

" If a man die, shall he live again ? "

Yes, in glory, in the making of the newer fields—his blood and his valour the seeds for a more spiritual harvest to his country and for his kin. The seed cannot be quickened until it has lain underground. So it seems, as one thinks of it, as though England and France had been obliged to sow these Fields of Time with living seed.

Here and there were ruined churches and a few broken-in houses ; and further along the new entrenchments for great guns, in case of Paris being threatened again. But there was not much more to see than this. Still, over all the land and over everything we did, there was the spirit of excitement and of war. At the little station, even, as we took the train later, one man was bidding his mother and wife and little family good-bye as he went to the front. The women's faces were heart-rending, but the man was brave and gay, his face set toward *là-bas*.

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

The first-class carriage into which we tumbled was full of officers—seven of them—going home, my dear, for the first time since the war began, eleven months ago. I wish you could have been there and sat by my side during that hour's journey. To my left was a captain in the *Chasseurs d'Afrique*—a man of about fifty, and without doubt he would find in Paris no one to make him welcome. But the others—in the cavalry, in the artillery, in the infantry—all in different uniforms—high boots and trench boots—every one shaved clean and neat, and yet bearing upon them the marks of the campaign—weather-beaten, rugged, eager; and yet still, in the eyes of some of them, dazed bewilderment, as though they had been brought back too suddenly into the quiet and into security. It was to me a very impressive journey, and at the Gare du Nord the tide of blue seemed to surge out through the station into the Sunday streets. It flooded the cafés and Metros and taxis—everywhere, the men coming home for four days, for eight days at most, snatched from the living death, given back to caresses and tenderness, to tears and to thanksgiving—to be torn away again so soon . . . so soon.

Of course I have become very much interested in the group of men to whom I give electricity.

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

The patience and dignity of these soldiers is a constant lesson ; and they are so polite and so grateful—such splendid fellows—and it is so dreadful to see their mutilations.

I am quite conscious that all I write now seems a repetition of an old story, probably tiresome to you. I can only, my dear, envy myself deeply. I cannot envy all of you over there—not at all. I would not have missed, for any luxurious immunity in the world, or for any family life, or for anything, the wine I have been permitted to drink at the table of France and of England, too. The very trifling bit that I have been able to do, I cannot help but feel, has linked me indissolubly with these suffering countries, whose ideals and whose standards are the ones for which my own country has already fought and for which it stands. If I were a man, I should have joined the Foreign Legion long ago.

We hear with interest of the good service done by the American aviators ; and nothing that has been said in America has seemed to me more beautiful than the Harvard young man's address at his graduating class, as Hugues le Roux quotes it in the "*Matin*."

Dr. Brewer, at Mrs. Whitney's ambulance, said that all the surrounding country was dependent upon the ambulance for medical aid, as all

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

the French doctors were at the front. So one of the young surgeons has undertaken the "santé du pays," and gallantly sets forth, when he has time from the "blessés," in a little grey motor, to do the country rounds, and to bring babies into the world, and the like and the like. As he is not a gynæcologist, he has been up against it sometimes, and finally stood blankly before a very ailing week-old baby, seemingly not at all tenacious of life. The little Frenchman didn't want to "grow up to be a soldier," born though he was in the war zone, within sound of the guns. So the young surgeon, whose French vocabulary was very limited, and whose knowledge of baby feeding was more so, said to the mother that he thought what the kid wanted was "*solid food*"! This, of course, being perfectly unintelligible to the peasant woman, did not pull matters along very far, and the young man bethought himself of the only French vegetable he knew by name—*choufleur*—and he conveyed to the mother the idea *that she must give the baby cauliflower!* What she did about it, I don't know, but the sick baby *got well*, and will be all ready for the Germans in 1935!

Dr. Brewer also at luncheon told us of an American crossing on one of the Channel boats. He said to the steward: "Where are your

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

lifebelts, steward? I don't see them anywhere." And the steward, looking at him sarcastically, said: "Are you one of them damned fools that thinks *every* boat's going to sink?" And the gentleman replied: "Are you one of those damned fools that think *no* boat's going to sink? I was on the *Lusitania*."

Dr. Brewer told us that the British War Office had cabled to the Columbia people that the need of surgeons and nurses was very great. So many English surgeons have laid down their lives already, and, of course, the active need for them is tremendous. Dr. Brewer said that three contingents of thirty-six surgeons and seventy-five nurses had already been sent from Columbia, and that altogether there are about two hundred American surgeons, and four or five hundred nurses over here. Also that nearly all the first batch of nurses and doctors who went to Serbia had died. I think these glorious things ought to be known, and that the people should have the credit due for them.

Last year, when I wrote to you from here, I was still so personally conscious of my own solitude and of what I wanted and could not have, that a great deal of the perspective of things was lost. Now, somehow or other, I seem to have become merged in the whole to a gratifying extent. I

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

have been disintegrated in order to be integrated—
if you can understand me?

As ever,
M.

PARIS, July 20th, 1915.

DEAREST VIOLET,

I am worrying all the time about the expensiveness of the furniture, because I know that you will contrast it with the Italian rococo rotundo risplendo business, and you will find that your graceful Louis Seize is "higher and fewer." Well, I can't help it. If you cut off diplomatic relations, perhaps you'll cut off antiquity relations too. *Chi lo sa?*

I saw a very touching thing the other day in the Madeleine, where I went to Mass. A woman no longer young, in the heaviest of crape, came in and sat down and buried her face in her hands. She shook with suppressed sobs and terrible weeping. Presently there came in another worshipper, a stranger to her, and sat down by her side. He was a splendid-looking officer in full-dress uniform—a young man, with a wedding-ring upon his hand—one of those permissionnaires home, evidently, for the short eight days that all the officers are given now—a hiatus between the old war and the new. He bent too, praying; but

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

the weeping of the woman at his side evidently tore his heart. Presently she lifted her face and wiped her eyes, and the officer put his hand on hers. And as I was sitting near, I heard what he said :

“ Pauvre madame, pauvre madame ! . . .
Ma mère pleure comme vous.”

She glanced at him, then bent again in prayer. But when she had finished, before she left her seat, I heard her say to him :

“ Monsieur, j’ai beaucoup prié pour vous. Sachez que vous avez les prières d’une vieille mère à laquelle ne reste rien au monde.”

He touched her hand again and said :

“ Merci, madame. Adieu ! ”

It was just one of those intensely touching pictures in that dimly lighted church, full of worshippers, that one can never forget.

I went yesterday to see the aerodrome at Le Bourget, where the Nieuports lay along the ground like wasps, waiting to fly and sting. I would give anything in the world to be a soldier taking part in the trenches.

Coal is now a dollar a sack, and in the shops, one by one, everything is growing rarer. I bought batiste de linon one day at three francs a yard, and the following day it was *ten*, and only a few pieces at that ! Safety pins can’t be had.

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

I received a cable last night from Bessie, saying that they sail on the 12th August by the *Patria*, and asking me to meet her in Italy, which I can make no plans to do, as mother's health is very wavering.

With the idea of going into the next apartment—into that new and untried place that, like the girl said about sickly Italian love music, "I hate it, and I love it"—I conceived the notion of asking my old landlord to let me take with me the *boutons de porte*. I wanted these door handles, that have been turned and turned for years by the hands of those I love. I simply couldn't bear to think of those little brass knobs, that I have kept polished by the greatest effort in memory of the past, should fall under the vulgar fingers of other people, who would not even keep them clean. Strange, but true, the proprietor has consented.

Of course the kingdom of one's mind is a very great possession, but even in it one can't take the full amount of satisfaction unless one feels that all its capabilities and its possibilities are developed to the full. And even in these pathways of the intellect and of the spirit, it is possible and easy to go astray. It is not an easy thing to decide what ways are best or most complete.

My last few winters in America have developed

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

in me the strongest Americanism, and the active life of New York—I don't mean the rushing up and down Fifth Avenue in a motor, or lunching at the Colony Club, but the consciousness of that network represented to me by Sixth Avenue and the publishers' offices, that getting into direct touch with the mechanism that has made my successes, that coming into contact with active business life—is fascinating to me, and indeed has been for years part, as you know, of my existence. And then, being able, in a few moments, to come in contact with the people who are dearest and most sympathetic to me is, very naturally, a great thing in my life.

I close—not because I haven't anything more to say !

Best love,

M.

*To Mrs. Morawetz and Miss Andrews, New
York.*

4, PLACE DU PALAIS BOURBON, PARIS.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,

I don't want to change my home without letting you all know of the fact.

Can you realise that you will none of you ever

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

see again little old 4, Place du Palais Bourbon, with its memories, sad and lovely, its charm, the pretty little study, and the rest ?

To Violet it has a very real entity, and I hope some sweetness still. I never shall forget the day when she dragged me by the hair of my head up against a three years' lease at which I baulked and almost died. I never thought that we would be able to pay that rent. I expected to be sold up at the Drouot for back rent and taxes ! I expected every horror that a woman making her living under difficult circumstances could fear. But Violet's optimism, Violet's courage—and, above all, Violet's wish to make a home with me, to build this little high-swinging nest with some one she loved—to have a home of her own—were stronger than my fears ; and together, very slowly and unostentatiously, we made what has been such a charming entourage. She loved it with all her heart. And I have loved it even more. I have learnt priceless and wonderful lessons here ; I've had great and deep experiences. There is a charm about it, and a beauty that nothing else can ever give to me in the way of a home.

Here I have seen France rock on her foundations. Here I have watched with her, wept with her, and believed in her victory.

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

For many reasons I am not sorry to go.

You all remember No. 6, upstairs. We have all seen it together. Now it is free. On Monday—always a lucky day for me—I sign the lease. I shall have a long, irregular parlour, on the walls of which is a lovely old red brocade, antique, with pretty red taffeta curtains ; and on the floor a wonderful Savonnerie Aubusson carpet. That's the foundation of my new drawing-room. Of course it will be easy for you to imagine that I have not presented myself with this beauty ; and easy, too, to imagine that, like everything else that I possess, it has been a gift of love.

The long room at the back is going to be a bedroom with a bath ; and there's another bedroom and bath, a beautiful ante-chambre, a big dining-room, a study which will recall the old, a lovely bedroom for me with dressing-room and bath, a kitchen big enough to prepare the fatted calf in, four servants' rooms, an elevator, and a bully pair of concierges, who, I hope, will stand guardian to me for a new and successful future.

It is a bold step. I can ask my married friends to visit me ; I can give any one who comes a room and bath and a room for their maid ; so there won't be any excuse now for turning down my hospitality, and those who are

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

fat and weak in the legs won't have to walk upstairs.

Out of the windows I see all the beauty I have loved so long ; but I am above it—still higher—and the view is wider, wonderful. Far over to the left rises the lily-like spectre of the *Sacré Cœur*. It is too, too beautiful for words.

I was delighted to find that all my curtains fit, and, of course, I have more than enough furniture to begin with. The place will be repainted, with the *chauffage* and the bathrooms in, by October, and I hope I shall rent my old place by then.

Quite apart from anything else, I couldn't stand the stairs any more. I used to stay out because I simply couldn't come home and climb them. And when, over and over again, *Mme. de S.* came to the door and couldn't come up, and Mother came to the door and couldn't come up, and when I, when I did come up, was alone, I finally broke the spell. Now I have enlarged my horizon, and I can open hospitable doors.

When I came over here this time, I lay in my bed on these wonderful summer mornings and watched the little shadows of the Golden People crossing the ceiling, and I said : " Now, I am going to sit here and see who cares enough for me to come. And whoever does, and whatever golden person crosses my life now, is going to

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

come in and make it, and I shall open the door." I stood at the window of the study and looked out at the lonely, lonely streets, crossing which no vehicle came any more bringing me guests whose sweet presence made the happiness of my life ; and I said : " The day will dawn surely when some one will break through this lonely barrier and come."

It is only two months ago—not quite that—and when I first got here the restlessness was terrible. I wanted to make Mother comfortable and rush back to New York. I wanted to go anywhere, away from this cruel solitude, where the very echoes made me weep. And then—a transformation occurred in me, and something changed. For the first time in my life, I have been content to wait, to do nothing, to wander about the little house in a sincere peace, to arrange my things with pleasure ; and I have loved it as never before.

Don't think that this is illogical and paradoxical, because I am shedding the shell like a chrysalis. Remember I am only going next door. The Place du Palais Bourbon is mine still—but I've gone up higher. . . .

With deep love to all the Golden People,
As ever,

M.

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

To Miss Foote, New York.

PARIS, Aug. 3rd, 1915.

My DEAR MARY,

You can't think how glad I am that fate has given you the trip across the continent, and the change of scene and rest that it must all mean to you. Of course I should have loved to have seen you here, and in many ways the experience would have been wonderful for you. On the other hand, I dare say that America offers, in many ways, a greater stimulus just now.

Here, for the civilians, things are calm. Forain has added to his fame and made himself more immortal than ever by his wonderful cartoon at the beginning of the war: A *poilu* (common soldier), filthy, ragged, saying: "*Pourvu que les civiles tiennent!*" It has become an epoch-making *dessin*.

Artist that you are, you would have revelled in the beauty I have seen, in the pictures that I have seen. True artist that you are—one of the truest I know—how you would have responded to everything! My dear, it is for this reason, perhaps, that I write you to-day—sure, across these thousands and thousands of miles, of your responsive sympathy.

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

One after another of these semi-detached midsummer streets I have rolled over, in and out and through, in a little yellow-wheeled victoria, driven by a toothless and agreeable old coachman, buying on all sides furniture for Violet, for two months now. The work has been so absorbing, I have taken it so seriously, that it has crowded out my own work entirely and made me a semi-maniac. Antique furniture buying is a vice, there's no doubt about it. All absorption in any one thing is a vice. And I begin now to understand why collectors die poor and why collections are sold. But I speak of this in order to speak again of the wonderful, wonderful streets, here in this wonderful city. How well you know them, too! Mysterious, vocal, fascinating, and to-day appealing and pathetic. All around the patient, cleanly industry continues. Filth and dirt you almost never see anywhere. Indeed, here and there are lines of starving and fatherless, waiting *en queue* before the doors of the different civil charities. The children seem more than ever beautiful: bare-legged, with little white shoes and stockings, the little girls are too sweet for words; but one's eyes follow now more tenderly the little boys, the little sons of France, coming up to replace those who have given their lives as flowers are given. And it seems as if the mothers

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

held them more closely, lead them more needlessly by the hand—these little sons. . . .

Uniforms everywhere, of course—sky-blue, pale and faded by the trenches. You see a man with three decorations across his breast—the Legion of Honour, Military Medal, Croix de Guerre—and you wonder what wonderful bravery this simple-faced, quiet-eyed man has been inspired to. Three stalwart chaps will limp along there, down by the Rue Bonaparte toward the *quais*—three men with only three legs between them. This you see everywhere ; and the bandages over the eyes of the totally blind. . . .

Let me give you, who love pictures, these : Up on the Rue Tournon, a very low old window, up in a very old house—one of those extremely compressed entresol windows with latticed panes ; the window half open, and on the left, in an earthen jar, masses of snowy and crimson flox—nothing else. Another : Out here, back of my house, is a little *maison de rapport*. One June twilight, I saw a little dressmaker sitting in the window, her pure profile sharp against the darkness of the room behind her, dressed in a little camisole as classic as though it had belonged to Charlotte Corday. Across the window-sill a soldier's coat of blue. By her side, in a common pitcher, was a great bunch of Madonna lilies. She was sitting

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

dreaming—wondering, no doubt, if the next passing of the postman would bring her one of those stampless cards from the trenches. . . .

The pictures are many: they are countless. I could not begin, my dear Mary, to tell you half of them; but I wish indeed that you were here to see. When one has time to think of it, the constant effort all about, and on every side, the vividness and liveness of that living and vibrant *cordon humain* which has stretched nearly six hundred miles, is electrifying beyond words. How real it makes real things seem! How glorious it makes real love seem! For nothing could hold against the force of that steel machine and against the irony and the iron of forty years of plan and plot, and an intent and design to possess and to kill, but Love . . . the love of wife and child, and lover and home, the love of country. The hands that are pressed against the invader now are the hands of those who for nearly half a century have been making for peace. Therefore, they are not mailed. They are flesh and blood. They are the fine and delicate hands of the poets, the artists, the men of thought and of spirit, the hands of the industrials, of those who have been making fine and beautiful things, whilst the Germans were making shot and shell. These hands seem to be a very hedge of defence,

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

mutely calling upon God to bless them. So, with me, see them pressed against the invader to force him out of the devastated lands. Is it strange, as we look, that they almost seem to us to bear the glorified stigmata? . . . So, as I think of the power of love, it seems more than ever greater than anything else in the world; and in this way you may look upon this as a spiritual war, in the face of which peace is ignoble, and only effort is divine. . . . I do not think that any love, however unfulfilled, is in vain. I cannot believe it any longer at the close of this strange, terrible and beautiful year. My heart has gone out so constantly to those robbed of their beloved by death. They are all around me, everywhere—known and unknown. And my heart, too, goes out so deeply to those who, as it is called, love in vain, though there is no such thing. To be able to love at all is so marvellous that no matter what suffering it brings, life is only worth living through that agony, through that passion, through that poignant, ever-demanding pain. Pity those who cannot love, not those who do, no matter whether they lose or gain.

I am sure—I know—that you understand me as perhaps no one else can.

Everything has dignity through this—everything has a *raison d'être* through this. Only by

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

this is anything ever created and made. I understand so well that great, far-reaching demand and cry for the satisfaction of the need, for the response and for the answer ; but even in the face of complete renunciation, in the face of inevitable loss, in the face of what we all call failure and renunciation, I say again : Love completely and call yourself only happy when you can.

Write me a line and think of me, as I know you always do.

As ever,
Devotedly,
M.

F. B. Van Vorst, Esq.

PARIS, August 4th, 1915.

MY DEAR FREDERICK,

I have not quite understood about the war souvenirs. I have ordered to be bought for you all the notices publicly posted in the streets since the day of mobilisation, and have already received thirteen, costing ten francs apiece. It will be quite a paquet of documents, if I can get them all. Some of the souvenirs are very interesting ones, and I am going to send them by the American Express. I hope to be able to get you a copy of the Mobilisation Order, but they

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

are hard to get, and very scarce. I heard that Von Schoen, the ex-German Ambassador here, got one through some one at the American Embassy, and had to pay frs.6000 for it ! Another man paid frs.1500, but there is just a chance that I may be able to get one for about sixty francs—under a hundred, anyway.

Your mother is remarkably well and walked from her house nearly here the other day.

Things aren't half as bad as they seem to you in America, because you get the German "news." The stories of bravery and devotion are legion. One fine little woman who had married a hairdresser and was only used to homely, feminine duties, took on his shop when he went to the front, and learned the business, so that now she is a capable little shopkeeper and hairdresser, and said in speaking of her husband on the firing line : "Oh, I've long given up wondering *how* he will come home—whether whole or maimed. Now I only say, *When* he comes back, *if* he comes back. It doesn't matter *how*. I can work for him and take care of him. All I ask is that he may return." This is the magnificent spirit of all the French women.

With much love,
Your devoted sister,

M.

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

To Mrs. William K. Vanderbilt, Newport.

4, PLACE DU PALAIS BOURBON,
PARIS, Aug. 1915.

DEAREST ANNE,

It is a long time since I had your letter. I think of you very often, although I have been silent. Your presence is everywhere in the place where only last year I grew to know you for the first time.

You can't think how impressive it is to be in a city that is almost deserted. When I tell you that one day I drove from the Trocadero to the Pont Alexandre, on a Sunday afternoon, without meeting a single vehicle, it will give you an idea of the desolateness of these streets. And the crowd, too, is such a peculiar one—all the men old or frail-looking. One wonders where the singular inhabitants who have suddenly appeared upon the scene keep themselves in normal times.

Wandering about alone, as I have been doing a great deal lately, I have gone into many of the churches and prayed at the different shrines, and it is impressive to see the character of those who come in to pray. Men who can never kneel again; men who sit with bandaged eyes before the lighted altars, for whom all the visions of the world have been blotted out for ever; the

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

poor women in their little shawls ; women in their crape veils ; the man going to the Front ; the man who has come back from it, never to take an active part in life again ; and the women who ask the Mother of Sorrows to remember theirs. This morning I went to St. Etienne du Mont just before noon. Around the tomb of Saint Genevieve were burning several very high candles. The woman told me they would burn for four days, and I lit one in memory of the patron saint of Paris and left it standing high and white, spiritual and beautiful, in the corner of the dark old church.

The sacredness of Paris now blends with its beauty, and the city itself seems to keep—in absence of millions of feet who used to tread its streets, in absence of the heavy, noisy vehicles that are doing their duty as transports, in absence of all the tourist and stranger throngs that never were of it—Paris seems to have gone back into the dim past, expressed by these relics that remain : the churches, the Louvre, the Tour Saint-Jacques, the tumble-down streets ; and the whole atmosphere of the place, as I have seen it this summer, has been one of the most sympathetic and charming things that you could possibly imagine.

My mother was eighty-one years of age

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

yesterday. She celebrated it by walking up the three flights of stairs to my apartment, to see one or two of the lovely bits of furniture that I have been buying. Last year she was a refugee in England; this year she is revelling in her little home, spared to her because of England's help.

A very agreeable Abbé dined with me last night. He told me that he was giving absolution to one dying German boy—only sixteen—on the field, and he put his hand under the boy's head and lifted it, and the boy, who was delirious, simply said: "Mama, mama, mama!" And the Abbé said to me: "It is a very curious thing, but in all the dying appeals I have ever heard, it is always for the *mother*." That return, perhaps, to the lost childhood—the call just before going to sleep. . . .

You speak to me about your summer being an unsatisfactory one. I am inclined to think that it can't be that, knowing you. Wherever you are, you have done good and splendid things, vivifying and inspiring and encouraging those near you. I scarcely know of any presence more stimulating, more impelling to action, and I envy those who have had the pleasure of your sweet companionship.

To-night is one of the nights of full harvest moon. The skies have been so marvellous lately,

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

thickly sown with summer stars, and it is an impossible thing to those who have not seen those dreadful and distant fields to imagine the horror that is going on so near these cities which that constant, magnificent courage, that limitless sacrifice, protect.

One day when I was giving electricity lately at the Ambulance, a poor little Zouave hobbled in—he had only one leg left—and held up a maimed hand for me to treat. He was not a very interesting-looking specimen—rather sullen and discouraged, I thought—but as I looked at his frail little body and his disfigured hand, I looked at his breast too. Three medals were on it—the Legion of Honour, the Croix de Guerre, and the Médaille Militaire—all a man can get! And he was just a little soldier of Africa—a nondescript man whose name would only be heard at other times to be forgotten.

Jacquemin.

“Qu'est-ce que vous avez fait pour mériter tout cela, mon ami?”

Pour mériter tout cela, parbleu! He has one leg only, one hand only, and he has back of him eight months of hospital and eight months of horror, for his sufferings have been beyond words.

Jacquemin!

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

Oh, his name is pretty well known now in a certain Sector !

“ Qu'est-ce que vous avez fait pour mériter tout cela ? ”

Three medals across that narrow chest !

Well, alone, on a bad night, in storm and rain, he was a volunteer patrol. Alone, he brought in four German prisoners. He was a volunteer for six *patrouilles* of the gravest danger—not always alone, but always fetching in prisoners and more prisoners. Bad for the Germans. He carried his superior officer, wounded, out under fire and saved his life. Then there was a line of trenches where a hundred and fifty-six men—they know his name : Jacquemin ! Jacquemin with the little mongrel dog always at his heels—a hundred and fifty-six men had eaten nothing for four days but the sodden bread left in their haversacks. Jacquemin filled several wagons full of bread and seating himself on the driver's seat of the first, he drove in that life-giving line under the fire of shot and shell, right into the very jaws of death. He brought sufficient supplies to save the line of trenches, for otherwise they would have had to evacuate them through starvation, as indeed was the case with others where this gay little Zouave could not reach. Just the giving of food to the faint and hungry men whose stern faces

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

were set against death. That act brought him one of those medals across his breast—I forget which. Finally, the shot and shell which he had braved so many times was bound to get him, and with his leg and arm almost shot away he lay for dead amongst the other slain, and they buried him. They buried Jacquemin. Fortunately or unfortunately—it depends upon how he regards a life which he will live through henceforth with only one leg and only one arm—a little bit of his soldier's coat sprouted out of the ground. (They don't always bury deep on those fields.) And his dog saw it and smelled and dug and dug, and whined and cried, until they came and unburied Jacquemin and brought him back.

He is sitting up there at the Ambulance now, and his little dog is sometimes in the kitchen and sometimes comes up to the wards.

Jacquemin !

“ Qu'est-ce que vous avez fait pour mériter tout cela, mon ami ? ”

What countless thousands of them have done, all along those lines—Englishmen and Frenchmen, Scotchmen and Irishmen, Indians, Australians, Canadians—hearts and souls and bodies offered up magnificently and valiantly sacrificed for the greatest Cause for which humanity has ever fought ! Jacquemin brought them bread to the

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

fighting line ; and that great fighting line, by its efforts, is giving bread for ever to the world. . . .

You may, my dear, know this poor chap, Jacquemin, well. Perhaps he was in your own ward. Indeed, my dear Anne, I should not be surprised if you had stood beside him through some of his dreadful dressings. But then again, he may have been one of the many who came in just after you left.

I cannot tell you how I long, long to be in America now ; nor can I believe for a moment that my people do not voice the sentiments and the hopes and the patriotism of the Allies. It could not be otherwise. . . .

The other day I wrote my first article in French, and the *Echo de Paris* has accepted it and asked me for more. Of course you can't imagine how surprised I am, and how perfectly delighted to find that I could dictate in French an article that a first-class journal would accept without corrections ! Monsieur Jules Simon told me so himself. I will send it to you.

My dear, let me congratulate you with all my heart on the recognition of your work by the French Government. I am so glad. How deeply and entirely you deserve it !

As ever,
M. V.

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

To Mme. Hugues Le Roux, Tokio, Japan.

PARIS, Aug. 1915.

DEAREST BESSIE,

All day to-day I have been anxious, thinking of you on the *Touraine* crossing to Bordeaux. The news of the *Arabic* and its sinking, with the loss of life, was not reassuring to any one whose dear ones were putting out to sea. I could not bear to think what this week of anxiety would be.

Yesterday I went down to the *Matin* and saw Robert's secretary. Mr. Dumont told me that there was a question of your going to the Far East—Japan, Petrograd, and so forth. You can imagine with what mingled feelings I heard this news.

I have always thought that perhaps you were the one person in the world whom I unselfishly love (except my mother), because in what is good for you I can forget myself. You can imagine how keen this loneliness is here. Nobody knows better than you what Paris is when one is utterly alone. My absorption in buying Violet's furniture is at an end, for I have almost completed her purchases and the second invoice went to-day. Mme. de S. is at the seaside, and there is not one human creature in the place with whom I

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

can exchange a word. Nor will there be until *you* return.

No words can tell you how glad I am that you are going to have this marvellous and beautiful experience. It seems to me that it must be the greatest thing in the world to go off into those wonderful countries with the person you love best for interesting work. What could be more ideal?

I look back and think now, my dear, of all those cruelly hard years of yours spent here in anxiety and toil and loneliness, and in many instances overshadowed by such dreadful griefs; and in contrast now your happy marriage and the opening up to you of far horizons and the companionship always near you of the one you love the best. Both mother and Hilda feared very much, I think, for my disappointment when this news should come of your prolonged absence and the great distance between us; but I want you to believe me when I say that I have not had one selfish thought about it—I might say, no regret. Everything is sad here, intensely sad. I could not wish for you to return to these scenes just now.

I am sorry, darling, that you will not see ever again this little home—probably. But after all, nothing makes much difference in these

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

moments of change. When you come back, if I am here at all, I will be installed at No. 6. I have told you nothing of what I have been doing lately, but in buying all this enormous lot of things for Violet, I've come across one or two very beautiful objects, and I have bought two perfectly wonderful Louis XV. lacquer desks, worth from five to ten thousand dollars apiece, Of course I have paid no such prices as these for them. They are like jewels. One is Vernet Martin black, with golden figures and turquoise blue inside. To-night, my dear, it stands in the little salon, in the place of the old Dutch bureau we know so well ; and over it hangs an exquisite little group by a pupil of Boucher. And in the doorway near the dining-room is a red lacquer bureau, with a pinkish marble top—the most beautiful piece of furniture I ever saw. It is a perfect gem. Some of the little things I have seen in this moment of disintegration I have bought for very little and shall keep, I hope ; so you will see them in the new home.

Dearest Bessie, take care of yourself in every way—about disease and danger. I shall pray for you devoutly.

I have just spent a sweet five days with Mme. de S. at Cabourg. There she was, in a tiny little house, all alone with her grief, her memories,

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

and looking into a future devoid of interest. It was perfectly lovely to be with her, sad though she was. I loved every hour of my little stay. It was five hours in the train each way, but I was glad to go. She was like a sister and a mother and a friend all in one. No one in the world is like her to me, and I just adore her, there is no other word. Two or three times, quite alone, I went down to the sea. Never did it seem more marvellous to me or more inspiring. All the Normandy of the years gone by that together you and I knew and loved came back again with its tender memories and met me in those harvested fields and on that wide, smooth sea floor. I looked across the water that stretched to where you were and thought how soon you would cross it to me. I did not dream that it would be so long. . . . Oh, my dear! memory after memory came to me, until sometimes it seemed that I could not bear to welcome any more. I saw again, Bessie, the little *diligence* climbing the Falaise side from toward Havre, and you and me on it going down to welcome mother and John—do you know how many years ago? (I will not mark the years. As I stood there, down by the sea, there was no trace of time on that limitless expanse.) So many partings since then for you and me—so many, many

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

tears, long years of struggle, days of hope, and days of despair. There have been safe ports and harbours, and you, I feel, with Robert, have sailed safely into yours. You see, I do not speak of myself—I can't.

You must feel, I think, my dear, as you read this, that these last few months—I will not say years—have made some change (I hope for the good) in me. Certainly I don't complain and bemoan my lonely fate as I used. Sometimes I wonder if my unusual tranquillity is a kind of despair, or a renunciation—if it presages some disaster, or if it is only the threshold of age. You see, I dare not hope that it may be the threshold of joy. Oh, I assure you that, standing there that early morning as I did, never, never have I felt so near to the truly spiritual things of life. By this I don't mean religious things, but the things of *soul*.

All around me were the tiny red and white tents—here and there a bright yellow one—the little pleasure houses of the few who this year have gone down for the summer to the sea. And everywhere were the sweet, charming little children playing, bare-legged, on the sand. I watched them build their miniature forts—little Frenchmen playing at war. I watched them with their pretty games, and I tried to see myself

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

sitting there with a book, watching a child. I tried, companionless as I am, to see myself standing there with a companion by my side. . . .

Normandy has been a rich field for the poets, as you know, and for the thinkers and idealists from England and from France. It is a very country of dreams and song. No one knows this better than you and your husband, who is a Norman born and who loves every inch of it. I think of that wonderful collection of verse that I have loved so much for years—you know it well. Its meaning was made clear to me by John. I can see him now, there on the Norman beach—tall, distinguished, with the little red book in his hand, "The Midsummer Holiday." And on that morning, as I stood alone on the beach after all these long, long years, I knew for the first time why I had loved that verse of Swinburne's so: and I knew for the first time what it meant.

"The sea is at ebb and the sound of its utmost word
Is soft as a least-wave's laps in a still small reach;
From seaward ever to seaward, in search of a goal deferred,
From leeward ever to leeward, reach on reach,
Till earth gives ear to the lesson that all days teach—
With changes of gladness and sadness that cheer and chide.
The long way lures me along by a chance untried,
That haply, if Hope deceive not and Faith be whole,
Not all for nought do we seek, with a dream for a guide,
The Goal that is not, and ever again the Goal."

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

The last time I was in Normandy was when I was taking back to England, via Dieppe, "Amanda of the Mill" to sell in London. That winter, if you remember, I had been very ill in Arragon, Georgia; and whilst lying down there—alone, in a cotton mill town, without any nurse or any doctor—in a moment half of delirium and half of consciousness, I made a solemn vow. On one night of fever in that wretched little shanty, I prayed to the Blessed Virgin, and I said that if she would heal me and restore me to health, so that I might write "Amanda of the Mill," I would be a Roman Catholic. Of course I never kept that vow: but that summer, in Dieppe, with my book finished, I remember going into the old cathedral there and burning a candle and, thinking of my vow, buying a rosary and prayer-book, learning the Ave Maria and trying to pray; and, recalcitrant and unwilling, unconvinced and unbelieving, I could not and did not fulfil my promise. I never have . . . I thought of all this as, with Cousin Lottie, I went into the old cathedral at Caen and we prayed together before the Virgin's shrine for the souls of her beloved dead. Indeed, as I went into that church, I knelt with her unconsciously before a cluster of lights: I did not know where I was kneeling, but when I

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

looked up, I found to the right of me a beautiful statue of the Madonna. It seemed very strange. I only mention all this as I seemed so singularly led back here, after many years, to the old footsteps, my weary feet unconsciously falling just where they had fallen before. . . .

I cannot tell you how perfectly lovely Madame Augenard has been to me. If you love me, you'll be glad and touched at her friendliness, her sisterliness, and her real goodness to me. I have in her an honest and true friend. I always have had. To-day she lunched here with me, with little Nicole. As you know by now, she has given me, to inhabit as much as I like, a beautiful little house on her estate. The Saturday before I went to Mme. de S.'s, the eve of the fifteenth of August—the Feast of Mary—I spent at her château. As I wrote, two hundred soldiers are quartered in her grounds, sleeping on straw in the old farm buildings and commanded by Mme. de S.'s cousin, the Comte de Puy. We had just seated ourselves at dinner when outside the château gathered a little group of the soldiers with their musical instruments, and they played for her their best selections in honour of her *fête*, for she is called, as you know, Marie. We both stood there in the window, whilst the men, in their light blue uniforms, played their

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

martial tunes. In the distance was the fountain, splashing and dashing its waters. A little further on, the clock on the old church rang the hour; and far, far away, muffled but audible, was the sound of the guns at Soissons. You can't think how impressive it was—and how sad. Mme. Augenard went down the steps to thank the soldiers. She was all in white, and over her dress a dark-blue Chinese embroidered coat, and her little girl came down and stood by her side, and the leader of the band brought a great bunch of country flowers, gathered and arranged by soldiers, and presented them to the chatelaine for her *fête*. Later in the evening, the Comte de Puy and Madame Augenard and myself stood in the starlight by the fountain, and we talked of the war. . . .

Next week I am taking Hilda and Webb and going to Salsomaggiore to rest and finish "Carmichel's Past." From far Japan, wish me luck and good fortune as, my dearest, darling Bessie, I wish you Godspeed and safe home.

Devotedly,
M.

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

Miss B. S. Andrews, New York.

August 4th, 1915.

DEAREST BELLE,

It seems a long time indeed since I've given myself the luxury of a real letter to you. During the last two weeks I have had an Italian guest, to whom Paris and France were new, and it was a mutual interest to see what one can see of Paris now together—especially to do things with a deeply appreciative and keenly sensitive companion. Nothing of beauty or charm escaped him, from the smallest detail.

A perfectly killing thing happened one day. We were driving in the victoria, out on an antique furniture hunt, when way down the boulevard a Paris *gamin* sprang on the step of the carriage and hurled something into it. I've never been so startled in my life as I was by this rush into our tranquil moment. I didn't know whether it was the head of a German or a dead rat. Gaetano peacefully and calmly leaned over and lifted up a black kitten which, before I knew it, he had as calmly planted in the middle of the street, on the other side. I am glad to say it rushed off before the tram came, and Gaetano assured me that it brought the best of luck.

Then I must also note that one night, walking

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

down the sightless, gloomy, shadowy Champs Elysées together from Mme. de S.'s, at eleven o'clock, we were shadowed by an apache. Although many nights I have wandered around here entirely alone, I was scared to death, and I seized Gaetano by the arm and said : " Let's run ! " He stopped quite still and looked at me with great reproach, and said : " Why, you seem to forget you're with a man ! Why would you run ? " I don't know whether the timidity on my part had charm for him or not ; but at any rate, as I looked at him, so big and strong, muscular and vigorous, and at his great big cane, and into his quiet, determined face, I didn't feel afraid any more.

I never have seen anything so beautiful in my life as Paris has been on these divine nights, as we have driven around it in open carriages and in motors. It is almost completely dark now, with the great masses of Notre Dame, the Louvre, the Conciergerie, and the spanning shadows of the bridges dark and blurring softly against the moonlight of the summer nights, or darker shadows on the overcast evenings ; with here and there just a light or two from a window or a low muted lamp. Paris of the old, old days—so easy to reconstruct and to imagine !

On Sunday morning I went out to St. Germain, where Mme. Marie met me with her motor and

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

took me out to the lovely château that she has bought in Seine-et-Oise. It is a François Premier property, surrounded by great moats all grown in with ivy and grass. Her château itself is modern, but her gardens and fields are too lovely for words. She has four hundred soldiers quartered in the farms, and at luncheon what was my surprise to find that the *Commandant* was no other than the Comte de Puy, Cousin Lottie's dearest cousin—a man I know very well! We had a most agreeable time, and, of course, he told us wonderful things of the campaign. He was sixteen days in one trench without being able to leave it—without once being able to stand upright; and he says that no one who has ever smelt it will ever forget the smell of a German soldier! The filth and the dirt and the sordid awfulness of the Germans they took prisoners at that time was beyond words. This was in the early part of the war, on the first line of battle.

To the left of Mme. Marie's property is one of the sweetest little bits of masonry you ever saw in your life. It is part of an old tower, built in the time of François I.—unchanged, pinkish brick and brown stone. It was built for the archers to climb up into and from its windows to look over the wonderful Norman plains for their foes. The moat runs round it, and now, from one window,

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

one sees the new rose gardens, the lovely shaded alleys, and the fairy-like Norman fields. The little place has undergone many changes, the late proprietors having turned it into a grapery and fruit house, because it is so dry and healthy. In the high, high cellars are wooden beams and a big furnace, and there's an outside staircase. One goes directly in to a good-sized room with a bow window looking on the fosse. Then there are two other tiny rooms with cunning little views, two bedrooms, a charming parlour, dining-room and study all in one, and place for a little bathroom. Upstairs is the *serre chaude*—a great big warm greenhouse, where one could make an enchanting *jardin d'hiver*. With the outlay of very little money, this tiny place could be transformed into a dream of a place to go and pass the Sunday or a few quiet days. As I write of it, doesn't it sound sweet? Can't you smell the Norman hayfields, wafting in their sweetness? If you could hear the charming tone of the little church bell—for the church and just a handful of quaint little houses fling themselves against the château wall. From this little pavilion you could almost put out your hand and set the hands of the village church clock! . . . Well, I have lots of friends who have beautiful places, but none of them have given me a little pavilion to which

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

I can flee and which I can adore. Mme. Marie has. And next week she is coming to town to choose the papers ; she is going to paint and paper it with her exquisite taste, she is going to put in the bathroom, and I am going to give the bathtub and lavabo ; and we're going to fix it up together, and there I can go when I like. And when the weather gets hot in Paris, I am going to take Miss Methley and finish my book there. It is restful just to think of it, as Miss Methley says as she writes this letter. I am just springing it on her, as it was sprung on me : and if I never go, and if I never see it again, I can't forget the generous sweetness of my old friend, for whom I've always had an affection and whom I have known now for twenty years. Of course, her mania is to furnish and install, but it's very nice that she wants to include me in this exquisite installation. I felt quite differently about the country when I left it this time. The whole thing is so charming and so exquisite. Little places are horrible as a rule, but a perfect little place on an enormous, beautiful estate is another thing. If the affair works, I can fit up a tiny kitchen downstairs, which I shall want to do, and be *chez moi* entirely. At any time I can take out a friend—for there will be two bedrooms and we are quite apart from the château.

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

So much wonderful kindness has been shown me in these old countries. I can never forget the goodness poured upon me ; and of course I feel that in turn I should be willing to pour out myself into hands that are stretched out to receive. . . .

I am sure that I make you feel something of the rich, beautiful atmosphere of that Norman land as I saw it this week. Through the little village pass only soldiers, to and from the towns : soldiers of the reserve, soldiers of the entrenchments around Paris ; and some going home. In the far distance, when the wind was (let us say) cruel, we heard the heavy thunder of the German guns bombarding Soissons, only sixty kilometres away. Ecquivilly is only a few miles from St. Germain and a few miles from Trouville, and if Bessie is at St. Germain in September, and Cousin Lottie at Trouville, it will be amusing to be myself between them both. Of course it may be only a dream. It seems too much to count on to have an exquisite little country place. . . .

It seems terrible to write of material things, doesn't it ? when the great spiritual struggle is going on everywhere. For some reason or other, I have not bought one of these beautiful objects which I have purchased lately without feeling that I was possessing something more of this

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

beautiful country's art—keeping and protecting something more of France for posterity.

One of the guests at Mme. Marie's had come from Arras, where her château, with all her treasures gathered together for forty years—everything—had been stolen, sent back to Germany, and her place reduced to powder. Your blood would boil if you could hear the Comte de Puy's stories—that is, if it hasn't boiled and overflowed already.

I am very interested in writing you this letter to-day, my dear, from this little home, which I left just a year ago last Saturday in such haste and distress. It seems strange, doesn't it? Then I was planning for destruction and disintegration; and now, in the same country, still under menace, still with horrors around us, I find courage to plan for new footholds on this land. France seems peculiarly sacred to me, its ground watered by the blood of those brave and gallant sons. Its very wings seem lifted by invisible hands. Nothing in history has ever been more wonderful than its great, patient effort against a horrible invading force, against every quality that we all despise, and against which, with one common interest, we fight and have fought for generations.

It is just a year ago last night since Henry Dadvisard ran down the stairs in the Rue Galilée,

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

after bidding good-bye to Mme. de S. When he got to the last stair, there in the hall were grouped all the servants, to wish him God-speed—the women first, and the valets and other men at the door. Mme. de S., whom he had kissed and strained to his heart, twice turning and running back upstairs to kiss her again—watched him. The cook had been thirty years in the house ; he kissed her on both cheeks and wrung her hands. Then, when he came to the men at the door, he bade them care for his adopted mother loyally and well ; and to the little footman who held the door open for him, he said, putting his hand on Albert's shoulder : “ Toi, mon petit, je te reverrai là-bas.” How strange and how beautiful ! Henry Dadvisard went to his regiment, joined later—as you know—the infantry, and there, in that company, “ là-bas ”—was poor little Albert, frail wraith of humanity that he was—only nineteen. He carried the flag, and he fell two days after Henry, on the same glorious field. . . .

I think the expression “ Là-bas ” thrilling and expressive beyond words.

I found Mme. de S. last night weeping over the crowding memories that each anniversary of these days brings. “ I have been able,” she said, “ to remember each day, and he has seemed living to me until now. Now—to-night—as once more I

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

seem to see him run down those stairs and go, he is *gone*." . . .

I had not thought, when I began to write to you to-day, what a fitting close this letter is to these letters of a year ; but it is so. Strongly, wonderfully, throughout these months stand out, shine and inspire, the ideals of Love, Courage, Devotion : Patience in terrible sufferings ; Charity and Tenderness, Self-forgetfulness : Gifts that mean sacrifice—as from one end of the earth to the other men are laying down life for a holy Cause. Over these cruel sacrifices rise the spirit of ineffable youth ; the glory of patriotism ; love of home and country—all which makes the foundation of the human race enduring. I close with the beautiful words of Henry Dadvisard to his squadron as he bade them good-bye :—

“Above all the changes that agitate humanity, three things alone exist and remain : The Intelligence which comprehends, the Will which believes, and above everything else, the *Sentiment by which we know how to love*.”

As ever,
MARIE.



COMTE HENRY D'ADVISARD

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

THE FAREWELL OF HENRY DADVISARD TO HIS
SQUADRON OF CUIRASSIERS, WHICH HE LEFT
TO JOIN THE 66TH REGIMENT OF INFANTRY.

COMRADES,

I have gathered you together this morning to say good-bye to you.

I am not going to speak to you of the Present, because it is a heartrending moment against which my heart breaks. . . .

I am not going to speak to you of the Future, because the future belongs to God alone. . . .

But I have the right—indeed, it is my duty—to recall to you the Past . . . the Past which we have made together and which we have lived together !

Officers, non-commissioned officers, brigadiers and troopers of my beloved Squadron ! For every man of you who has ever come under my ægis, I have had but one word, one single order : Duty. It is in order to more completely accomplish my own duty that to-day I have the courage to part from you.

And you, all of you, with a unanimous *élan*, with a magnificent generosity, and with the spirit of your adorable youth—you have responded to my call and you have placed your heart in my hands. . . . And it is for this that I want

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

to thank you. This moment contains a happiness that no other human love could ever equal. . . .

Now go back to your duty, without discouragement, without sadness, recalling to yourselves unceasingly the one great thought that we have often followed together : this—To know that no one man is indispensable, and that above all the changes that agitate humanity, three things alone exist and remain : the intelligence which comprehends, the will which believes, and above everything else, the sentiment by which we know how to love.

LES ADIEUX À MON ESCADRON

MES AMIS,

Je vous ai réunis ce matin pour vous faire mes adieux. . . .

. . . Alors ! Je ne vous parlerai pas du présent, car c'est la minute déchirante où mon cœur se brise ; je ne vous parlerai pas de l'avenir, car l'avenir est à Dieu seul ; mais j'ai le droit, j'ai le devoir de rappeler devant vous le Passé que vous avez fait et que nous avons vécu ensemble . . . !

Officiers, sous-officiers, Brigadiers et cavaliers de mon Escadron bien aimé, chaque fois que l'un de vous est venu se ranger sous mon égide,

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

je ne lui ai jamais proposé qu'un but, celui du devoir accompli. Aujourd'hui, c'est pour essayer de m'en rapprocher davantage que j'ai la force de me séparer de vous ! Et vous tous d'un unanime élan, par un don magnifique de votre adorable jeunesse, vous avez répondu à mon appel en plaçant à nu votre cœur dans ma main !

. . . Ah ! voilà ce dont je veux vous remercier —voilà le bonheur qu'aucun autre amour humain n'égalerait jamais !

Eh bien, maintenant, retournez à votre devoir sans découragement, sans tristesse, vous rappelant cette autre grande pensée que nous avons souvent aussi évoquée ensemble : à savoir que l'homme indispensable n'existe pas et qu'au-dessus des changements qui agitent l'humanité, trois seules choses demeurent :

L'Intelligence qui comprend, la volonté qui croit et par-dessus tout, le sentiment pour lequel nous aimons !

St. Amant, 26.2.15.



SUPPLEMENTARY LETTERS



Miss B. S. Andrews, New York.

SALSOMAGGIORE, Sept. 12th, 1915.

MY DEAR BELLE,

How you would revel in the beauty with which I am surrounded! How you would love this country, what delight you would take in all I am seeing! You know I've wanted to make an Italian excursion and now, when Paris and all it represented of responsibility and fatigue and sadness, was growing a burden, Italy drew me irresistibly here.

For years I have wanted to come to Salsomaggiore. With my perfect idea of geography, I thought it was on the Lake Maggiore. Nowhere near it, as far as I can tell, although I don't know much more about its geography now than I did when I came; but I know that we are on the edge of the "War Zone." Here they don't make so much fuss about it as they do in France, and to-day we drove into it bravely, and were not once stopped for a passport. I can't bear to use the words "war zone." I am tired, heart and soul, of the word "war"! I could shut my eyes on the loveliness of these towns when I realise that bombs from enemy aircraft were

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

dropped upon Brescia—so near us—and that 160 people were killed. . . .

The cure here is wonderful—iodine and soda baths, in water brown and salty. When it gets in your mouth you can't bear it ; but you grow to love its soft, strengthening effect upon your body. I get up very early in the morning and walk on these wonderful hillsides, where the figs are growing ripe, where the grapes are growing ripe ; and when once up on a dewy, ravishing little plateau, down in the valley I hear that rich, melancholy, swinging note of the bell of San Bartolommeo, the little chapel of the town. But there is nothing sad about the bell. Alone as I am here, pregnant as the moment and time is with sadness, for some reason or other there is nothing melancholy or sad about any of it. It is beautiful and restful and full of charm.

When I come down, refreshed and hot and healthily tired, I take one of these reddish baths, stew away for twenty minutes, and then comes the most divine and remarkable cure of all—two hours and a half wrapped in a bath robe, lying on a balcony in the broiling, delicious sun. I have done this for ten days, and I never, never, never shall forget the delight of those hours on the balcony of this hotel. I don't move—neither restless nor nervous—I look away beyond these soft, sweet hills, into a divine sky, and over the tops of those little gentle mountains, soothing, happy, promising and lovely thoughts come.

I feel so intensely grateful for the love that has been in my life, for the affection and kindness

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

that have been showered upon me, for my splendid health and for my work.

The restaurant amuses me enormously, because it is full of picturesque Romans and Florentines and Neapolitans—the *noblesses* of all the counties is well represented. The place is smart, and even now quietly gay. There are soldiers *en convalescence*, there are political men from Rome ; and I like to watch it all. . . . Then follow a little more treatment—a “ pulverisation ” or “ inhalation ”—and sometimes work from five to seven, sometimes work in the evening ; and now and again an opera at the theatre, which lots of times is not half bad.

Caruso comes here every year for the cure, as do many of the famous singers ; and the Queen Mother, who is very popular and beloved, is also an annual visitor to Salsomaggiore.

I wish you could see the little street at night, with its pink, green and yellow houses, the blue sky above it, the incandescent lamps swinging in it, the brown awnings, and, as we wander home from the cinema, a little cafe filled with simple, cheerful people, congregated to laugh and enjoy—what do you think ?—a Punch and Judy show ! Just think of it—right there in the street at night ! Oh, it's too amusing and attractive for anything !

America seems far away. As I never get any letters from any one, nothing brings it near. I can't help but feel, in contrasting the lives, that over there we are always scrapping around and going like mad to get money with which to do

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

something else that nobody really wants to do very much. And over here one *lives*, one really lives. You just stretch out your arms in this sunlight and expand and breathe; your tense nerves relax; you're ready to settle down here with a simple companion and watch life around you—take what part you can and enjoy it. That's the way I feel. Perhaps it's because I weigh 145 lbs.; perhaps it's because I've got my certificate of baptism here, and I know just how old I am. I am going to sleep with that under my pillow, for fear somebody'll read it! Mother sent to the place where she was born and got her certificate of baptism, and found she was four years younger than she thought. Since then there's been no living with her! She has the airs of a debutante. But *my* certificate worked the wrong way.

Cremona is in the war zone—I have to write the word again, though I don't want to. If I told you that I wished the sun would never shine on Germany again, that the moon would never lighten its harvest fields again, how fiendish you would think me—how you would criticise my breaking of neutrality! Ah, when I think of the riches *they* have destroyed, when I think of the beauties that France can never call back again, when I think of their accumulated horrors, human, material—I am no longer human myself. And here, in this glowing country, with its jewels all around me, I feel like protecting them with my arms and my soul, and I wish I had fifty lives and could give them all

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

to these lands that I love. That's the way I feel. . . . I have no spirit of criticism in regard to the policy of my own country. My country—right if it's right, wrong if it's wrong—is my country still.

How far I get from Cremona ! I wanted to go there because—do you remember?—there, in your little parlour one night, inspired and fired by some talk we had had together, I planned out a little drama on the idea of a Stradivarius violin made in Cremona. I drove there to-day and found it glowing under a September sun. The Duomo has a Venetian tower—high, high up into the blue—a great big light blue clock on it ; little arches with snowy marble figures running along to the right—I can't describe architecture : it's beyond me. It was like a pomegranate, like an orange, like some wonderful fruit. Then the basilica, romanesque and baroque, was enormous and brilliant beyond words. Oh, what would I not give to have had you see with me that scene to-day ! On the left as we entered was a tiny little chapel to the Madonna, all red—brilliant—a crimson lamp burning before the Heart of Mary. Pillars, arches, roof, aisles, everywhere, painted, decorated, golden, crimson—the most jewel-like and brilliant decoration that you can fancy. But the great sight was the High Altar, lighted with candles for the "Salut." Three priests in red and white robes were officiating, and with the delicate, flickering candlelight blended the azure smoke from the swinging censers. All the church was

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

full of the people of Cremona—kneeling on that stone pavement in such attitudes of faithful piety, in such attitudes of appeal. Old men praying for their sons in the fighting-line—those Alpini; little old women with handkerchiefs on their heads; children young and old. I have never seen such devotion, such touching, touching attitudes of prayer. We stood and watched these lights and the wonderful spectacle of the altar. After the elevation of the Host, when the service was finished, every light was extinguished, as if by magic, and at the same time great curtains of tapestry were pulled aside, and through the stained glass windows, all over the altar, poured a flood of glorious sunlight. I have never seen anything like it—never.

I have become acquainted with a very agreeable woman—the Marchesa di Bourbon-Rangoni. She is here with her little boy. She looks like an American, and has a gentle voice, and is altogether simpatica. She is separated from her husband,—and lives with her two children on the Di Faustina property. (Her sister-in-law is the Principessa di Faustina.) I discovered that we had many mutual friends, and, curiously enough, a great friend of hers, the Countess d'Orsay, came to-day, and it turned out that she is a chum of Marie Edgar's.

Yesterday I went over to a castello, the palace of the Soragna family, dating from the year 1000. I won't describe the rooms there, with their gold and crimson walls; but right in the heart of the castle we found a wonderful

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

little chapel, and high up in the red-hung gallery, built in for the noble family, the woman with me knelt down and prayed. I could not but wonder whether she was praying for her son in the fighting-line, or for her daughter, whom she is going to bring out shortly into Roman society, or for her own lover fighting in the Trentino. What a complex, wonderful mixture life is, isn't it? Half the world praying for what the other half has got and *vice versa*. Lonely women who have had husbands and lost them; lonely women who wish they *could* lose their husbands; lonely women who have no husbands and want them; lonely women who have no husbands and don't want them—and what in heaven's name is coming their way?

Did I tell you what a rich German said to Gaetano one night he dined with him in Philadelphia? After showing Gaetano the pictures by Old Masters in his library, and when Gaetano had properly admired them all, the gentleman said, with a melancholy expression: "Oh, it's all very well; but, you see, they don't pay any dividends." That's *one* way of looking at a picture gallery! You can imagine how it struck an Italian to whom beautiful pictures have always meant *more* than dividends—I suppose you will say "Unfortunately."

In one of your letters you asked me what I thought of American diplomacy? It is impossible from this distance to understand it. Fortunately, I don't have to be responsible for any people's diplomacy. The question is too great and too

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

far away. Over here we see the insults offered to the United States ; we follow the trickery and the lying stupidity of the Germans with surprise and disgust ; but I feel, too, that their filthy expectorations don't always reach as far as our big, distant country. Loathsome beasts—pouring forth their slime and their filth over the civilised world ! That's how I feel about them. I am glad I am not in Archibald's boots. I crossed on the *Rotterdam* with him.

HOTEL DES THERMES, SALSOMAGGIORE,
Sept. 17th, 1915.

DEAREST MOTHER,

I have been very much delighted with your letters. Hilda let me read hers. I do think that you are too remarkable for words. Your handwriting is so clear, and everything you say said better than any one I know says it—than they *would* say it, if they had it to say ! I don't know any one with your mind and your spirit. I feel as though I never could thank you enough for being my mother. I am sure this will please you.

It takes an awfully long time for letters to come here, and of course it takes an awfully long time for those letters that are not written to me to come ! And the result is that I don't have any letters at all—just a few scraps.

I haven't written you anything about this enchanted place. I wish I could make you feel what it has been for me.

I don't understand my own temperament at all

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

—I suppose it is not necessary that I should. If I could only go on as I start, how far I would get, and what I should accomplish !

There seems to have been an especial blessing in this place for me. I hope it is a real one. I hope it's not just my romantic imagination that makes it seem so. Whether it is or not, the pleasure that I have had on this balcony I can never, never lose. I shall remember always these golden hours. To-day I lay three hours out here in the sunlight—scarcely dreaming, basking like these little green lizards that run out over the stones and scare me to death. There is a very magic in the air, too. Every country has its individual odour and smell. (Paris, in the autumn, when the wood fires are first lit—heavenly odour, full of memories !) Here the very scent of the land is delectable—these fields, warmed by the most ardent suns, give out the smell of red and white clover, and of some Italian flowers whose names, of course, I don't know, being the least botanist in the world ; but I know it's not garlic !

One could take delightful drives if one could pay for them. There is every kind of vehicle, from a little two-wheel waggon a few inches high, drawn by a microscopic donkey, to motors of all kinds and makes. I believe that if I could settle down and live in Italy, I might become a better character. I really want to economise here, and it seems to me that one might almost find a charm in living within one's income !

The doctor wants me to take twenty-five

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

baths, which would mean that I would not leave here before the first of October ; then spend a week in Florence, and the rest of the month near Rome—perhaps in Perugia—and really finish “Carmichel’s Past.” This I plan to do. I am going to stay in the little pension you and Violet and I stayed in together as cheaply as I can ; and I am going on cheaply until I’ve finished this novel.

You say that I should be grateful because I can have this wonderful cure and rest. Perhaps it is because I am so grateful for all I have that the good things come to me. Certainly my heart is just overflowing with thanksgiving for the moral and spiritual uplift that this rich experience has been.

You remember the desk that you have there in your parlour ? That desk stood in my little apartment in Twenty-Seventh Street, as you know, the winter dear John was with me. I wrote everything that I had to write that winter at that desk ; and sometimes John wrote there too. I can see him sitting writing at it now. It was February—the month he died. I had planned to have a little party on the 27th of that month, in that tiny little sitting-room, and ask a few of my friends to come and hear me read aloud my first short story—something he liked very much indeed. It was called “The Path of the Storm”—do you remember ?—and came out in *Harper’s* after John died. I remember looking up at the calendar that hung over that desk and finding February 27th, and

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

marking a black cross on it—the day of my party to be. The 27th came, and it was the day John died. . . .

I speak of this, for all its sadness, to follow on to something else. Sitting at that desk, John wrote on a scrap of paper, in his strong hand, with a bit of pencil, something that—for some reason or other—had crossed his mind : just a line :—

“Oh, come away to the greenwood tree ! ”

I don't know whether it's a line of a poem or something he meant to elaborate ; but when I opened that desk after he had gone, I found that little errant slip of paper. It was dear to me. I picked it up and fastened it just across the top of the inner part of the desk, where I kept my papers. For fourteen years it was always before my eyes. I never read it but it seemed to speak to me with a peculiar message. Down in Rome, four years ago, when I was recovering from pneumonia, it seemed to call me then. I thought of it constantly. But for some reason or other, although the call was decided and clear to me, I have never answered it.

I recur to all this to say that here, in these September days, seventeen years after he wrote that little fugitive line, I feel that I have responded to his call. You know that I have never been fond of the country. Thoroughly urban and intensely alive, meditative life and isolation has always driven me to melancholy and discontent. But here—now for some reason I can't tell why—the outdoors has spoken to me for the first time

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

without sadness. For the first time in my life, over these small and gentle hills, I have seen the sun set without that sharp pain at the heart that beauty gives to those whose lives are solitary and who have suffered a great deal. For the first time, I have seen the moon rise, and loved it calmly for its pure beauty, without longing and without regret.

So, dearest Mother, when in your letter to-day you said to me so charmingly : " Let companionship be found by you in contemplating the works of God in the beautiful country where you have wandered now," I think I may truly say to you that I *have* found such companionship.

Not long before I sent that desk over to you, that beloved little scrap of paper had fluttered away. I don't know where it went. It was material, but its spiritual message has been fulfilled. . . .

With best love,

Ever,

M.

SALSOMAGGIORE, September 17th, 1915.

MY DEAR CARLOTTA,

You know how often I have called you by an Italian name. I have thought of you so much since I have come to Salso, and wished a dozen times that you might have been with me here. I should love to see your graceful silhouette passing through these rooms. This happens to be one of the places that I think you would enjoy immensely, from all points of view. Restful

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

and charming ; gay, and yet not too blatantly so in this sad time.

The Sicilian soldiers are allowed to take their long knives into battle with them, and they throw away their muskets to use their knives, as the Indians do ; and they say that the bravery of those little Sicilians has been superb. When the Austrians see them, they throw up their hands immediately, and ask to be made prisoners ; and the Sicilians give them to understand that they're not taking any prisoners to-day, and they must fight or be cut up. But the Austrians take prisoners, when they can get them, and their brutality is pretty well shown in the following incident. They took pains to find out which prisoners were from Calabria, and then told the poor chaps that all their homes had been destroyed by earthquake ; and the poor prisoners cried like children. There seems to be no refinement of cruelty that the Austrians and Germans have not employed, even to trafficking with the sentiments of the prisoners who fall into their hands.

Much of the cream of Roman society is here at present—everybody very simply dressed and quiet, of course. It's a most interesting study for me—so different from anything I have ever seen ; and you can't think how sweet and cordial they are to me—those of them whom I've met.

I am going down from here to Florence for ten days, to stay in a little pension where Violet and Mother and I stayed years ago ; and from there to Rome for a few days, and then for three weeks to Perugia.

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

I heard a charming thing the other day about some English soldiers. It seems that where they are fighting, up in Flanders, under a little hill some thirty or forty of the boys had been buried in a little cemetery just out of the German fire. It was safe, but it was dreary and lonely—a bare cluster of graves. There happened to be, not very far from the lines, a pond overgrown with water-lilies. One early morning, in the dawn, when they thought it safe enough to risk, several of the Tommies swam out into the pond and gathered garlands of the lilies, and carried them over to the graves. The soldier who wrote it from the trenches to me said: "And if you'd known the men who did it, you wouldn't have supposed that one of them was soft-hearted enough to risk his life to put a lily on a grave."

If you write me before the 15th October, address Sebastì & Reale, Rome. Otherwise, 4, Place du Palais Bourbon, Paris.

With love to all,

Ever devotedly,
M.

To Mrs. Victor Morawetz, New York.

SALSOMAGGIORE, Sept. 20, 1915.

MY DEAR VIOLET,

Yesterday I went for a motor drive with the Marchesa di Rangoni to a fifteenth century castle a few miles from Cremona. The Marchese G. S. at twenty-two has come into possession of this old fief—in his family for 500 years. He is a fine boy, and lives there,

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

the tiny little village coming in, almost, at the window of his study, as he looks at the town across the moat. There he sees the ducks and the geese, and the little bent old women, and those who are left of the men, the miniature donkey carts, the charming children, the clean roofs, the pink and violet and yellow houses; and from son to father, and on back, back, all the eyes of the villagers have been turned toward the *castello*, where his people have been nobles so long. His mother died in May, leaving him this possession. There are miles of lovely park, through which we wandered at sunset, the rosy light filling the bosks and shining on the turrets. Bebetta Rangoni and I went with a young Venetian officer, there on leave for a few days.

"The war," he said, "which is taking so much from every one, seems to have given to us Venetians Venice again for our own. No one is there but the people themselves and we, who are really fighting for our hearthstones. At night there are no lights—none—but a few little shaded lamps, like in the fifteenth century. But not even the hand of God has put out the moon and the stars, and Venice is there under their light. Oh," he said, "we who are born in Venice are born, I believe, with an extra beauty-loving sense—we love it so! And just now its treasures seem so rich and so precious."

He turned to me and said: "You must come, Signora, and see Venice now—the real Venice—and watch with us for the Austrian aeroplanes—if they still dare to come!"

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

Afterwards we had tea in the tiny room that the chatelain occupies, because, of course, the saloons and libraries are never lived in. Then we drove home, many, many miles, the moonlight's soft, warm radiance falling over these lovely fields.

This week I am going to Bologna, and I will write you of what I find interesting there. Then to Florence for ten days, to stay, my dear, in the Villino Solferino—to stay in the same old rooms! Think of the memories I shall find there! I hope to carry "Carmichel's Past" on far towards its finish in the same room where I wrote many chapters of "The Girl from his Town" and "The Successful Wife"; and where you and I, at midnight, chased that cunning, distracting little mouse! How far, far away it all seems! If any one had told you then that you would marry a distinguished man and have such a varied and interesting life, how hard you would have found it to believe! We were both so poor, and I was so anxious and so troubled about our future that I could hardly work. I can remember now waking in the night and feeling the weight of the burden upon me of years to come in which I might be too tired to work, and still the demands of life would have to be met. Fortune and fate, my dear, were kinder than we knew. Isn't that so? Everybody will ask for you when I go back there, and it is lovely to think that I have only good news to tell.

I'll close now, for the present, with much love.

As ever,

M.

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

To the Marquise de Sers, Paris.

HOTEL DES THERMES, SALSOMAGGIORE,
September 25th, 1915.

DEAREST FRIEND,

I do not want to leave this lovely place, where for three weeks I have had such benefit, without sending you a few loving words.

I think so much of last year, of what these days were to you, how you lived them through with patient grace and wonderful fortitude, as your mind and heart followed your boy in Flanders. It is very impressive in the Bible where it says : "The thing that I feared has come upon me," and I remember a friend of mine in America, who in one year lost her husband and her son, saying to me with wonderful composure, but great tenderness : "I have nothing to fear now any more. When it rains, when it is cold, when there is danger on land or sea, my heart never will tremble again, because there is no one whose going out into the storm can fill me with anguish and unrest." . . .

I am going from here to-day to Bologna, Ravenna, Rimini, and Florence. The cure has done me vast good. Although I am not entirely well, I feel like another person, and I should like to come here every year. Perhaps next year, dearest friend, you will come with me ; for there is much about it that you would like and enjoy, and you can be perfectly comfortable.

It has interested me very much, as a foreigner

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

and a student of life, to see what little there has been to see here of the real and "best" Roman society. Some of the smartest and most worldly of the Roman aristocracy are here at Salso. I have made one very good friend, however, in the Marchesa di Bourbone-Rangoni, who has a lovely property near Florence, on which she lives alone with her two children—a beautiful boy and a lovely little girl. She administers her own estate splendidly, has doubled her income since she became a farmer, and when she knits woollen things for the soldiers, she sits there knitting them from the wool of her own sheep. I call that very *chic* indeed; don't you? (I dare say she could give us, who need it so much, some wool.) She is a tall, graceful woman, very distinguished, with a great deal of *genre* and attraction. I like her immensely. I think she would be a good friend, and she certainly is a most agreeable one.

One of the most popular women in Rome, and one of the undoubted leaders of society, a woman whose word is quite sufficient to make you—and I am sure she is too generous to *unmake* anybody!—is the Marchesa di Rudini. Of course you know whom I mean. She is *très grande dame*, with a poise and charm. My few short *entretiens* with her have been delightful, and it has been a pleasure to exchange ideas with somebody.

I send you my best and dearest love, and will write you from Florence what I am doing there.

As ever,
M.

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

To Madame Hugues Le Roux, Petrograd.

RIMINI, September 28th, 1915.

DEAREST BESSIE,

We are in the Italian War Zone, and so far I have been able to circulate freely and without the slightest inconvenience, now that our passports are *en règle* from Bologna. It is hard to believe that all the formalities that make travel so difficult in France exist. Only three things make us know that Italy is at war: the grey clouds of soldiers drifting hither and thither through the tiny streets of these little towns, the fact that we are the only tourists anywhere, and the mediæval darkness of the streets at night. Think how charming it is to be in a country free of tourists, free of travellers, and—with the Italians—to have Italy all to oneself!

The beauty of Bologna at night, as we walked out late in the streets, hither and thither, under the arcades, was beyond compare. Think of the whole city—you can't say lighted, for it was not lighted, but faintly illumined by little lights flickering through turquoise and peacock blue shaded glass. Just picture it! Far down a dim arcade, one caught a little spark of azure; then there would be a little group of green lights. Every light in the strawberry and peach coloured city green or blue! This same wonderful phantasmagoria of lights is everywhere in this War Zone, menaced by enemies from the air and the sea.

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

When you think of the learned and richly interesting letters written about Italy, in Italy, and from Italy, it seems futile for an unimportant person to write any others ; but I don't think you often find Italy written of by a frankly-confessed ignoramus—by some one who knows nothing at all about either geography or history. I don't know where anything is—neither its position on the map nor the juxtaposition of towns ; and I don't know who any one was, and I never see sights ; and yet, as I do see them, and as they unveil themselves to me, and as their beauty reveals itself to me, how I love it !

In the train, on the way to Ravenna, a most gracious and interesting woman, whom I took to be English, spoke to me, and was so good as to tell us where we could get luncheon and where we could stay in Ravenna and Rimini. Then we fell into conversation, and when, at the station, a tiny cart made of woven ropes drove up and took her bags and her husband's valises away, she herself ciceroned us to one of the churches. There, in the sunlight, with her for guide, we saw for the first time the Byzantine mosaics in all their beauty in the church of Sant' Appollinare Nuova. Later, she asked us to go and see her " house " before we left Ravenna.

The Contessa Rasponi was modest when she spoke of her " house." On foot I went and found it, and it rose up out of the cobblestones of the street—a fine, warm-hued palace—a big palace, with noble windows and a noble staircase, and noble rooms. There is nothing modern about it

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

at all—not even the furniture ; and Ravenna folds it around. Through the open windows one looks right on to the clustering roofs of the city. All the little town seems to come in at the windows.

“ Here,” said the Contessa, “ I like to live, because those I know and love have all lived together here for six hundred years.”

(Do you know anybody you'd like to live six hundred years with ? It's nice to find that some people are fond enough of their family and cousins to want to go right on.)

Contessa Rasponi is a perfect dear, and her husband most charming. Theirs was the first intermarriage between the old families Rasponi and Pasolini of Ravenna for six hundred years !

Silent Ravenna ! And yet I heard several sounds there. (I will tell you what they were.) But the town is, taken altogether, the silentest inhabited place I ever knew. The name is beautiful, isn't it ?—Ravenna. And Rimini, too. How those words seem to sing and call back again in their cadences the figures of the past ! . . .

There are really no vehicles at all—just a primitive cab or two, easy-going victorias from the Middle Ages. You don't call donkeys and what they draw vehicles : they're just marvelously cunning, darling little things to go about with and in. And such heavenly little *asini* ! And such old-world, unchanged in character and manufacture, little carts—just a few bits of rope tied together and wheels dangling somewhere, and then a donkey a couple of feet high. These are the vehicles. Otherwise Ravenna goes about

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

—I am so sorry to say so—on *bicycles*. It's incongruous, isn't it? (Do you remember our bicycle rides at Divonne?) The bell of the bicycle was one of the sounds I heard in Silent Ravenna. Priests and tradespeople, factory girls in black and white poker-dotted dresses, gaily-coloured handkerchiefs tied over their heads, flit through the streets on the practical bicycle. But one doesn't mind them: they are quickly gone, and the shadows of the Middle Ages and the glow of the Byzantine settles around Ravenna.

Don't worry; I'm not going to give you any guide book description of Ravenna! I only know that I didn't know what mosaics could be, or what the word meant. You come across a little round tower like a cowshed or a pig-stye, and you wonder why they have left it and what the ages meant by it; and you open the door and go in, and then you know. Jewels on jewels multiplied; and such colours! Turquoise, peacock, golds and whites; swans and angels and doves, saints and patriarchs, on wall and ceiling, one after another. These vulgar, homely, ugly hovels blaze with beauty like some captured star. Think of such delicate, ephemeral beauty persisting for fifteen hundred years!

Ravenna! The very name chants to me as I say it and think about it.

And the little balcony of Francesca's house swings up in the blue air. I wonder they did not call her "Francesca da Ravenna." She seems so much more a part of it. Ravenna is such a lovely envelope for her memory. Dante, exiled here,

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

drew his story under the charm of her native town. I am sure that here in Ravenna he made his immortal picture of her. Here she was a little girl—dreaming, probably, over the sea-like marshes that isolated her town and that stretched between Ravenna and Rimini.

If I could only make you *feel* the picture of it! But I can't. I am surprised that so little is said or written about it. It is a marvel—a dream. I believe that I shall feel the silence of Ravenna all my life. You'll think this strange, when I enumerate the noises.

High up from an open window, as I pass along the tiny piazza, I hear the clicking of a typewriter! Way down one of the thread-like streets, close to the leaning tower, I saw a grey group of soldiers enthralled as they listened to a modern rag-time, ground out by just such a hand-organ as Italy brings to us across the sea. Then there was the bicycle bell. And then, at the Albergo San Marco, as modern as a good hotel-keeper who has tried his hand in Monte Carlo, London, and Paris can make it, I stayed awake until three in the morning with those of Ravenna who were silent by day and vocal by night. It is only fair to say, however, that there were two thousand soldiers quartered in the town, and the poor dears were going to the front. About six next morning, after two hours of sleep, I leaned out of the window and saw them marching away. . . .

I have just had your cable from Yokohama—just one line of love. Thank you for spending the money to send it. It was welcome indeed.

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

It found me here (in Florence) last night when I arrived, after a 200 kilometre motor drive over the Apennines. (October 1st now.)

My best love to Robert and you,
Ever devotedly,
M.

To Miss B. S. Andrews, New York.

FLORENCE, October 1st, 1915.

MY DEAR BELLE,

I am sorry that you could not go with Le Rouxs to Russia and Japan, but in this case I can quite understand your putting business before pleasure. I expect you'll make a fortune out of cotton and motors, and be a real Rothschild, speculating on the war. (As you have no Hebrew blood in your veins, you won't be cross at this.)

Speaking of a Scripps-Booth motor, and speaking of motors in general (for I believe you're interested in them), I wish you could have seen the "Rolls-Royce" in which we dashed away from Ravenna. Up at Salso, a beautiful white car was offered me for frs.600 (the rent of it, I mean), to take me from Salso to Florence. Well, of course, I didn't take it. I hugged the temptation, communed with it, went down and gazed at the car . . . and came back and went by train!

But at Ravenna, the proprietor of the "Ritz-Carlton" (!) there, offered me for the sum of frs.20 a motor going back anyway from Ravenna to Rimini. I fell to this, and when it heaved up before the door the following morning, it turned

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

out to be a taxicab. In this object, only a vehicle at all because it had four wheels, we rolled out into the rain and away from Silent Ravenna.

In front of an old church some five or six miles out, I discovered that I had left my Briggs umbrella at the hotel. Just why I should have tried to retrieve *this* umbrella more than the hundreds I have lost in my life, I don't know; but the "Rolls-Royce" went back whilst we "did" the church. That's about all the swift rolling *that* darned car did for the rest of the day!

Rimini, as the crow flies, or as the donkeys go, or as the bicycles glide, is about an hour's run from Ravenna. It's a mere nothing at all of a trip. How long do you think it took us in our car, in the rain? Just five hours! I don't know what blew up or blew out, not being an automobilist. A car can do almost anything and fool *me*; but this one did *nothing*. After we'd been crawling along for a few minutes, it stopped. We started out with two men "on the box," and then we lost one of them, who went off somewhere for something, and we sat there and enjoyed Italy for hours.

. . . I wish you could have seen little Angelo. He was five. He came and stood by the roadside, in his home-made trousers that reached below his knees, with his big, beautiful eyes fastened upon us, and his whole little figure the embodiment of childhood's dream. He was grace and charm personified.

There were other little children. One little

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

bare-foot chap, under a sea-green cotton umbrella, carried a bottle of milk for which the crying baby waited an hour whilst the little messenger dreamed with Angelo by the wayside.

We extracted from Angelo that he was going to visit his grandmother—like Little Red Riding Hood—and finally, munching a bit of chocolate that we gave him, he trudged away in the rain toward "Grandmother's" house. Later, when the motor decided to get a move on it, we found him again, a little further along the road; and I wish with all my heart you could have seen that group. Little Angelo at home, with a furry horse-collar over his shoulder, carrying it somewhere; his uncle by his side—the most superb-looking young man you ever saw, a wound in his neck, and his arm just getting over paralysis, back from the front on sick leave: and standing in the courtyard, her arms white with the flour she had been making into bread, a white handkerchief around her lovely head, Angelo's aunt—a beauty, a raving beauty! And then all the picturesqueness of that country yard; the yellow corn spread upon the ground, the golden pumpkins on the roof; and coming down the road towards the farm, a brilliantly painted cart—a cart painted with bright flowers, crimson and blue—drawn by snow-white oxen with horns over a yard long each. You never in your life saw anything so picturesque and so enchanting.

Then we left them. Good-bye, little Angelo, for ever! . . .

It wasn't long to me, any of that five hours;

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

for, one after another, such lovely, lovely sights on every side to see, and through all the air such heavenly smells of broom and thyme and walnut ; and high upon the umber hills, strongholds of robber barons of the Middle Ages ; and it was enchanting to imagine that in this landscape Francesca of Ravenna dreamed as she went with Paolo to Rimini.

Whatever charm Rimini may have had, Francesca must have given to it, those centuries ago. There is little left of old Rimini now—a fragment of a city wall, its brown ruin facing the sea ; a fragment of a gloomy, forbidding castle, to whose tragic walls Paolo brought her. There's little left of Rimini ; and yet, even now, the thrill and the passion seems to linger still. The morbid marvel of her love story makes the very air quiver, makes the place aflame still. I shall never forget with what intense feeling I read Dante, three years ago, with Casabianca in my little study. I remembered it here at Rimini so clearly.

No one knows where Francesca's tomb is, or where her body lies. It is as though her sepulchre were in the wonderful verses that she inspired, in the hearts of all lovers. . . .

The following morning, I fell to another motor temptation and came 150 miles from Rimini to Florence over the Apennines, over the very crests of the hills, past Vallombrosa, where the wind of late September blew away leaves like the ghosts of dreams ; down here to Florence, to the very place where, five years ago, I came with Violet and Mother. . . .

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

I shall forget many things that I have seen, but I shall never forget the message of Silent Ravenna, or the emotion of Rimini, where the elusive memory of Francesca seemed to palpitate before me like a flame. I could seem to see her steal out of that old gate and slip down to the sea and meet her lover there—the boy forbidden to her by law and whom her heart and senses so adored. Poor little mediæval children, so like the lovers of to-day, so unchanged is love! Drifting shadows in Purgatory, blown thither by the wind of passion if you like, but nevertheless immortal and eternal through their love.

As I stood there in Rimini, that last night in the War Zone, the green-blue lamps below giving their pallid light and the heavens strewn thick with brilliant stars above, all the present faded away, and I assure you that I could see as clearly as though it were before me the red-brown palace of the Malatesta and the inner room with its scant and meagre furnishing, and I could see the young figures bending over the story of Launcelot and Guinevere. . . .

When you receive this letter, you will be doing the California exposition on the shores of the Western sea, and all our Old World stories will seem to you like the dust off some old book that you shake away as you take the volume down.

With best love,
As ever,
M.

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

To Miss Mary Lyon, Morristown, New Jersey.

FLORENCE, October 1st, 1915.

MY DEAR MARY,

You say that you know it's useless to ask me to write you a line. Here are several !

How long ago it seems from to-day way back into that evening when I disgraced you at school ! Do you remember how, in the middle of the piece I was playing before the Faculty and the assembled schoolmates, I smashed my hands down on the piano and jumped up and ran out of the room because I forgot, and was embarrassed ? How ashamed you were of me, how distressed, and what *mauvais quarts d'heure* I gave you and my teachers at school ! I never shall forget Miss Dana telling me, my last year in school, what a bitter disappointment I was to the faculty, and how they had hoped to make something out of me and had failed. Well, that's very long ago, isn't it, dear, dear old friend ?

I am glad you liked " Big Tremaine." Thank you so much for telling me this. Nothing comes to me as a greater surprise than to discover that any one reads my books. I always know why I write them : there are two or three reasons for that. The first is because I can't help it ; the second is because I need money ; and—that's enough, isn't it ? But the reason why any of them should be *read* I have never yet discovered. " Big Tremaine " has gone through three editions

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

in England, and considering the war, that's a very good record.

Last night, I staggered into this little resting-place like a drunken sailor after a long voyage, intoxicated by the very air of an eight hours' motor trip from Rimini to Florence. These words perhaps mean nothing to you, my dear ; but you can't imagine how divinely beautiful the reality was. It was very hard, in that mid-country, to believe that anything later than the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was going on beyond. As for fighting lines and modern warfare, one forgot it all. When you see in front of a pink stucco house a little old woman bending over her distaff and fingering the snowy yarn ; when you see a farmyard, with the women spinning the flax ; you forget about the twentieth century ; and every now and then it is such a delicious and restful thing to do.

You say that you think of me as nursing the wounded soldiers. My dear, I am not doing that, nor have I been for a long time. I am taking a little excursion into the peaceful parts of the war countries, and it has been delightful in the extreme.

When I come to America next time, I shall surely see you. As you look back with me, my dear Mary, to the day when I first came to school, and chose you from all the teachers, as you sat there dignified and charming in your black and white check suit, and decided that you should be my mentor and my consoler—as you look back with me, my dear, and remember how I used to

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

write verses in my arithmetic because I couldn't do the problems, and how I used to write stories on my music-book because I couldn't play the scales; when you remember that since then I have written twenty-five books—all bad, of course, but still it means a lot of exercise—you don't feel I've been such a disappointment to *your* part of the faculty, I know! And I am perfectly sure, dear Mary, that you were not at that faculty meeting when they brooded upon the demerits of the unsuccessful scholar.

I wasn't more than fifteen that first night when I came to Morristown, unexpectedly, to a school too full to take in a rank outsider. Still they admitted me, and I slept in the trunk-room; and you were kind to me, I have never forgotten it. Miss Dana, the principal, took me to her study and looked me over, and fastening her intelligent eyes on me, frightened me to death.

She often told me since, that she asked me casually, as she asked all the girls, "Is there any special branch of study you'd like to follow?" and that I answered jauntily, "Literature—I am going to be a novelist"—just as one might elect to be a baker or a candlestick maker.

Please write me and tell me what you are doing, and believe me, as ever,

Your affectionate pupil,

MARIE VAN VORST.

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

To the Marquise de Sers, Paris.

FLORENCE, October 4th, 1915.

DEAREST FRIEND,

I was so glad to have good news from the wanderers—Bessie and Robert. I understand they will not be back before Christmas. It seems horribly long to wait to see them. When they started, I feared that the Germans would be in Petrograd before the Le Roux ; now I believe that they will never get there at all—I mean the Germans.

Our hearts are full of gratitude for the wonderful victories of France and England, and I hope that this good news will meet Robert and Bessie in Russia. I have a little letter from him, in which he says :

“Thank you for sending me the news that the Croix de Guerre has been placed on the grave of my beloved son. On his dying bed, he asked me : ‘Do you think they will know that I died well and bravely ? Father, do you think they will give me the Cross ?’ Then, I could not answer him. Now he knows. . . .”

All these days must be so full of terrible souvenirs to Robert. It will take him many and many a journey, and many and many a new scene, to blot out from before his eyes the pictures of the hospital at Toul.

Ever devotedly yours,

M. V.

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

From an English soldier in the trenches, to Ray Webb, my maid.

EXTRACT.

" . . . As I write in my little dug-out—only a hole scooped out of the earth like a rabbit hole—the enemy is continually sniping at us. They have trained men, good shots, who do nothing else but wait at loopholes in their trenches, waiting for us to show our heads above the parapet of our trench. They sometimes miss us, luckily. . . . It is marvellous how daring our fellows get. Although we are so near the Germans—only 150 yards—there are some partridges between us and an occasional rabbit ; so during the day we try to shoot them, and we crawl out after dark to get them.

" Last week I was out early one morning looking for fruit, and I found a pear-tree. I was just standing up to get some when crack goes a bullet just over my head. I fell flat and, of course, had to crawl back to our trenches without any pears. I managed it next morning, and had stewed pears and blackberries for breakfast. What a mixture, eh ? In the trenches, we are not allowed to make fires, because of the smoke showing ; but ' Tommy ' *must* have his tea, and he will always manage it. We get down in our little holes in the earth, and we utilize candle grease, vaseline, boot grease, rifle oil ; all these things, with a little rag, will burn, and over this

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

we cook and make our tea. 'Necessity is the mother of invention !'

"The greatest objection to the dug-outs is that they are swarming with vermin. Rats, mice, beetles, and a host of other objectionable things are always there, and we cannot get rid of them.

"A most interesting sight is to see an aeroplane being shelled ; but of course you have seen that yourself. It must be exciting for the aeronaut, but they fly calmly on and seem to take no notice. I have only seen two brought down, falling like birds with broken wings.

"It tries our nerve here sometimes, under shell fire. Sometimes when one is walking along the trench, a shell strikes the parapet, almost burying us ; but if no one is hurt it's usually treated as a joke. I believe I told you my chum and I were nearly caught one day on Hill 60, when a huge shell landed a few feet from us.

"If you should ever see me on leave, you must be prepared to see a very rough specimen of a soldier. Water is scarce here, and it often means going for days without a wash or a shave. I have enclosed a wee sketch of myself as I appeared last week, and honestly, it flatters me !

"It is surprising how cheerful and confident we are. Of course we want to get home, we are often hungry, we are dirty, and most uncomfortable, and we grumble ; but we are going to win all the time.

"That German sniper keeps splashing the dirt over me as I write, I have been creeping

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

round this morning trying to get a partridge, but no luck. I had decided to cook it 'en casserole,' but I have not got it yet.

"I must tell you a most amusing thing that happened last week. We were in a small village and our fellows are very French. Two of them wanted some milk, so went to an old lady and said: 'Dooley' (du lait)—'Compree dooley.' Well, the old lady did not 'compree.' After a lot of gesticulation and talking, the old lady brightened up and said: 'Ah, oui; je comprends!' Away she goes and comes back beaming and carrying *six onions*. To their credit be it said, they paid for the onions and came away. Another bought a tin of mushrooms, thinking he had apricots! It is amusing.

"If one of our fellows gets wounded, he is immediately classed as a 'lucky bounder.' Those who get home do certainly seem to have a good time of it, but I would like to get through it all safe.

"The Germans are now using great bombs which they try to drop in our trenches. The explosion is awful—fairly shakes the place. We call it the 'sausage.' 'Here comes another sausage!' is a common cry. 'Whiz-bangs' are another type, fired from close range. The moment you hear the 'whiz,' they explode 'bang' near the trench. We can hear shells from the big long-range guns screaming through the air all the time. . . ."

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

To Master Bobby Cromwell, Bernardsville, N.J.

FLORENCE, October 6th, 1915.

MY DEAR BOBBY,

How would you like to be a Montenegrin, supposing you could not be a Yankee? They're the pluckiest people in the world. I wonder if you realise that after Serbia was attacked last year by Austria, this little mountain race of war-like shepherds, in the face of all Europe, declared war on Austria, because their friend Serbia was attacked? There's a saying that "To be born in Montenegro is to be born without fear." Not bad, that; eh?

How would you like to be a San Marinese? (Always supposing you could not live in New Jersey!) In this case, we can avoid any aspersions you want to cast upon kings and queens, and Czars and so forth; for San Marino is a republic. High up on a mountain in the province of Emilia, is tiny, beautiful, ancient San Marino. It's quaint, and it's mediæval—or earlier still. (I won't bore you by giving you any date: you have enough of them at school, and nobody likes them.) It's brown and it's golden, and in the distance, from its piazza, you can see the Adriatic and Rimini.

When Italy joined in the war, little San Marino—about two miles long, and with at least half a dozen people, in the population—hesitated about declaring war upon Austria. (Brave as a lion!) Oh, San Marino's "all wool," if it's only "a yard

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

wide"! Finally, being as discreet as it is valorous, the little republic decided to maintain what she called a Benevolent Neutrality. (Bobby, my boy, that's what I hope you're doing in the U.S.A.)

Well, just think of what little San Marino has done, up there on its copper-coloured hill, with Italy at its feet. Whenever an Italian resident of San Marino was called to serve his country, called to the colours, the good little republic paid his salary whilst he was away. They raised forty thousand francs for the national fund for the soldiers; they raised a lot of money for the Red Cross; there's a feminine league and a masculine league up there to help Italy; and when charming little Rimini was bombarded like fury by the Austrian warships—a tower blown off a church, a roof blown off, a house blown down here and there—benevolent little San Marino sent down to Rimini and fetched up all the little orphans from the schools and brought them all up to the hills to take care of them.

Bobby, I wish you could see those little orphans from the foundling asylums of Rimini, in snow-white dresses, with white hats and bare legs, black eyes and dark curls. I tell you there are some little rosebuds and peaches and fine little kids among them—well worth picking them up out of Rimini and saving them from the Austrian bombs. You see, the Austrians don't care much what they hit—not that they're good shots, but they don't care. They'd just as soon smash a priceless church to bits as rip up a beer

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

saloon. *They* don't care! Beer and stained glass and rare old pictures and sausages and cheese are all alike to the Austrians and Germans. If San Marino is benevolently neutral, *they* are malevolently impartial.

Well, we've got something better to talk about, thank Heaven! than the Austrians and Germans.

When Italy declared war, San Marino quickly rushed down to the telegraph office and hurried off a telegram to the King, saying: "Viva l'Italia," "Long live the King!" and all sorts of benevolently *un*neutral things.

Don't you like it, Bobby?

There's nothing the matter with San Marino, is there?

Well, New Jersey's a pretty nice place, too. I hope it is benevolently neutral. . . .

My dear boy, I send you many, many greetings from the countries at war. I wish you could see the splendid Italian soldiers. I wish you could see the splendid English Tommies. I wish you could see the splendid "poilus," as they call the Frenchmen who have lived in the trenches for over a year.

Some day, perhaps, Bobby, you'll come over to see your godmother, at the right time; and we'll stand together on the Champs Elysées and see the tide of that victorious army—French and English—come marching home.

Best love

from

YOUR GODMOTHER.

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

To the Marquise de Sers, Paris.

FLORENCE, October 8th, 1915.

DEAREST FRIEND,

I heard of something last night so touching that I want to tell you about it, whilst its note is still ringing in my mind.

An Italian foundling—a poor, unknown chap—after a terrible battle from which he had escaped unhurt, wrote home to Florence—sent a letter out into the void, “to my unknown parents.” Father and mother he had never known. A deserted child, brought up in the charity schools, the first time that he really met the world on an equal footing with others was when he went as a soldier.

His letter, with its lonely appeal, spoke to the heart of a high-born Italian woman—and they tell me she is a very well-known woman indeed. She wrote him a letter, which was published in the papers, telling him that she knew that he was a good man because he did not revile the parents who had deserted him; that he was no longer to consider himself alone in the world; that when he came back from the front her home would be open to him, and that from henceforth her family should be his family, and they were all prepared to receive him with open arms and try to make up to him for his past loneliness and unhappiness. And all this expressed in the most tender, graceful fashion. . . .

The more I see of Italy, the more I adore the

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

Italians. They have so much heart, so much cheerfulness and gaiety, so much good humour. And the way they sing! Every now and then, when a silence falls in the streets, it is broken by some sudden singing voice, with a mellowness and a sweetness that makes you thrill.

Among the people that Austria has dragged and pressed into her thinning ranks during these last dreadful weeks are the wandering gypsy tribes—men unused to war, of course; unused to discipline; free as the air; and to whom rules are irksome and unknown. Many of these poor things, who had never worn shoes in their lives, dragged off their military boots and threw them away and went barefoot to the ranks. And one Romany, poor thing, longing for the music of his tribe, deserted, and when he was finally caught, confessed that he had only gone back to fetch his violin. Poor, poor creatures!

Signor Gozzini is an antiquity dealer. (Ah, you've caught me, haven't you? Of course, I've been into some of these fascinating shops!) Signor Gozzini is in uniform—grey, with a spotless white collar and one star on the collar of his tunic. He is all alone in the curiosity shop.

"Scusi, signora! Look; enjoy; see the things for yourself. . . . I used to think them beautiful. I've just come back from the Alps. I've been up there since the war began. All my other men have gone. Now I am back on four days' leave. These things," and he made a gesture with his graceful brown hand to the Genoese velvet, to the Venetian chairs, to the

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

Florentine and Roman treasures, "seem very unreal now. I suppose they have prices: I suppose they're part of what I used to call my business. . . . Signora, I've seen men die like flies; I've seen the snow of the Alps stained to red. I've heard my fellow soldiers cry: 'Viva l'Italia!' and heard the sound stop short before it finished. . . . And I find myself down here."

He put his hand to his eyes for a moment.

"I hear my mother and sisters talk about the little scandals of Florence." (He made another gesture.) "Signora, don't think it strange if I say that I've gone *beyond*. . . ."

"It's a good thing," he added, "for Italy. It's a good thing for human souls, Signora. Perhaps we will all be poorer in our bank accounts, but every country that is fighting to-day has gone up higher. . . ."

This was an antiquity dealer in a Florence shop!

With devoted love,
Ever yours,
M.

To Mrs. Victor Morawetz, New York.

PENSION CONSTANTIN, FLORENCE,
October 7th, 1915.

MY DEAR VIOLET,

Here, in this agreeable little *pension*, can you imagine how I think of you; can you imagine how easy it is for me to go back into our mutual

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

past here? I seem to see you everywhere—in the streets, in this little study, with its quaint, old-fashioned air. Here I wrote three books in one year, and two of them were successful! None of them would have been accomplished without your companionship, your encouragement and your sweet presence. How grateful I am for all that unblemished past! As I look back upon it, there was not one cloud, from the time you came into my life until you left it. There have been many since—cruel ones; but that was all sunlight.

You loved Florence so much. Yesterday I thought of you so often and how you would have enjoyed the afternoon that Ernestine Ludolf gave me.

High up on a far-away hill—on one of those heaven-kissing hills that rise sharply above the city—is an old Medici villa, sublime in its isolation, almost untouched and unchanged. Egisto Fabbri has bought it, and here Ernestine and he have spent the summer, out of the world.

Ernestine sent her motor for me early in the afternoon, and it took me to the beginning of a tiny rocky road, going straight up into the sheer hill. There the motor stopped, and what do you think waited at the opening of the mountain-road, to carry me up into the hills? A low wooden sledge, filled with hay and drawn by two of those great, snow-white, serene oxen—those beautiful beasts that we have so often admired and for which Tuscany is famous. Slowly, this primitive vehicle slid softly up (if you can slide *up*) the hill, through olive orchards and grape vineyards,

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

until we reached the summit ; and there, in the courtyard of the villa was Ernestine, with her brother.

From the terrace, through the arches of those old stone windows, you look out over miles of blue and purple Tuscany, over faraway hilltops, over hillsides where are sparsely scattered other white and yellow and grey castles and villas. There is the veil of the olives drawn across the landscape ; there's the purple and green of the grape vines. But I'm not going to describe it for you. It's beyond words to tell. Miles, miles, miles out of the world it seems ; and such remoteness, such silence, with its spirit of contemplation and its atmosphere of peace, I have never dreamed of. The ilex and the cypresses rise dark and black in Egisto Fabbri's gardens.

On the terrace we had peasant bread and honey and tea ; but better than that, we had a wonderful talk, for Ernestine's brother has a delightful mind and delightful things to say ; and I am sure you can imagine what an afternoon it was.

You'll think it's frightfully conceited of me to say that I think we are the only tourists in Italy. I assure you I haven't seen any others. Just fancy the extraordinary pleasure of being in a country like this without any travellers, or Baedeker-carrying tourists to offend the eyes !

There are two Austrians interned here—an old gentleman and lady who are from the Trentino, and are prisoners in the *pension* and its garden. I dare say they wish they *were* tourists ! But

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

even this little cosmopolitan pension is full of Italian officers, coming here to appreciate the good food, and even native Florentines! The war, with its many changes, has brushed the tourist fly brusquely away.

This afternoon, Ernestine sent her motor again, and I went to the Certosa, where a snow-white monk took me through—I might say—a deserted monastery. There are a few of the silent brothers left, but most of them have gone to the war. Think of it! Torn by their countries' summons from that tranquillity, from that isolation, from that peace. . . . Standing in the cloister, the Tuscan hills and valleys on one side, the monastery gardens on the other, the snow-white brother said to me: "Pray for peace. We pray for peace."

Each monk has a tiny little house. Seen from a distance, these tiny little dwellings form a crenelated wall around the Certosa. Each monk has his cell, his study, a little window where, on a stone seat, he can sit and meditate, and a little garden to plant and tend. Here he eats alone, the food being passed in to him through a little window. It's the Silent System. Sundays and Thursdays they speak together in the garden; otherwise—silence.

There are only twenty of these brothers left—all old, for those in whom the blood is still young have gone to spill it on their countries' battlefields. Men to whom speech is almost strange, mingling with the shouting, screaming hordes on the field of battle! Here Austrian, French, Italian,

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

German, English—these brothers lived together in a community of Peace, their mission service and prayer ; and now they are fighting in different fields, they are enemies, with Hate for a common cause.

How strange !

“ Have you any news from the monks who have gone to the war, Brother ? ”

“ Three of them have fallen : one Frenchman and two Austrians.”

“ Do you know anything of the war here ? ”

“ We have a few lines from our brothers at the front,” he said, with a pathetic gesture of those unworldly hands—hands that for thirty-eight years have known none of the commerce of the vulgar world. “ We never read the papers, it is forbidden. . . . Pray for peace. *We* pray for peace. . . .”

I came away from the Certosa with a feeling of its silence in my soul—a sense of its sacred peace.

More and more, I am beginning to understand why every one who has ever accomplished anything really great and truly beautiful in the past has come to Italy—has lived here and stayed here until some of its imprint has enriched their souls. . . .

Here is a very different picture, my dear ; but you who love these touches and these charming little bits of life, will appreciate it. In this house there is an awfully pretty girl, who is studying music for the stage. She is a true American and comes from somewhere beyond Chicago. In

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

speaking of the delightful cleverness, the astonishing, supple, civilised character of these people, she said :

" I ride a great deal and quite freely here, alone. The other morning, very early—about seven o'clock—on one of these lovely warm mornings, I went out to ride in the Cascine. The alley in which I rode was covered with falling leaves. As the sun has just risen, bright and gold, I seemed to ride right into the golden light.

" A young Italian city labourer, with a long, primitive-looking broom, was sweeping up the leaves. I always ride astride, as the custom of my country is, and I had on a soft cowboy hat. As I rode along like this, the path-sweeper stopped his work, and leaning on his broom, looked me directly in the eyes, threw his head back, and began to sing just one line—daringly, charmingly, in a full, fine voice :

" Che ella mi creda libero e lontano ! "

The first bars of *Johnson's* solo in ' The Girl of the Golden West ' ! "

Just think of that quickness and cleverness on the part of a common street sweeper ! Such a thing could not happen in any other country of the world, I am sure.

With best love,

As ever,
M.

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

LONDON, November 3rd, 1915.

DEAR BESSIE,

You will be interested I know in a book that Mr. Lane is about to publish. It is called "A Book of Belgium's Gratitude." It is a graceful and touching idea. The refugees whom England and America have housed and helped and saved have conceived the idea of publishing a volume which shall be an expression of their appreciation to the Empire and the United States. The Neutrality of Belgium, the British Guarantee, the Belgian Relief Fund, England's Organisation of Hospitality, and many other things relative to the conditions are in the book. It is under the patronage of the King of the Belgians, and among the Committee are Emile Cammaerts, Emile Claus, Henri Davignon, Jules Destrée, Paul Lambotte, Baron Moncheur, and Chevalier E. Carton de Wiart. Goblet d'Alviella, the Belgian Minister, Count Lalaing, Maeterlinck, M. Vandervelde, and Emile Verhaeren, too, are contributing to the volume. It interests me enormously, and I think it will be a great document. It will be printed in French and English and W. J. Locke has undertaken to act as Translation Editor. Miss Margaret Lavington is acting as Secretary. The book is written and illustrated by the most prominent Belgian Refugees in England and America, and Lord Curzon, Lord Cromer, Lord Dillon, Lord Latymer, Lady Paget, the Right Hon. Herbert Samuel, Miss Elizabeth Asquith, Mrs. Lewis Harcourt, the Hon. Mrs. J. H. Ward,

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

Miss May Sinclair, Horace Annesley Vachell, and many others are translating these tributes to England. The more formal announcement of the book is: **A BOOK OF BELGIUM'S GRATITUDE:** In recognition of the help and hospitality given by the British Empire, and of the relief bestowed by the United States of America during the Great War.

I am very proud that Eugene d'Alviella is amongst these authors.

This is my eighth trip across the Channel since the war began, and it has taken me twenty-four hours to come. You will be surprised, I know, dear, to learn that I am going to New York. You will be sorry too. I shall be "Home for Christmas." Do you know I am awfully pleased that "Good Housekeeping" has featured one of my "letters that never were written" in an enormous advertisement, "Home for Christmas"! I hope with all my heart that we will all be back in Paris then and have one of those wonderful reunions for which we plan so often, and which, alas! do not seem to come. I wonder whether you will pass your Christmas in Petrograd? And perhaps I shall be on the sea.

I never felt so terribly saying good-bye to Mother as this time. You cannot think how sweet she was, how brave and truly charming. In her prettiest dress, her silver hair a glory around her face, she stood with Mabel in the open window of her little house and waved me such a gallant good-bye. Oh, she is a wonderful woman! There is no one like her. I shall be

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

able to bear old age, I think, if year by year I grow more tender and more understanding towards it. And yet some one said to me once that the best preparation for old age was to keep in touch with the standpoints of the young.

It may be hard in a way to be in New York just now. I do not know how I shall find it. It seems to me from here that the thirty million Germans have multiplied and multiplied until they rule the spirit of my country. But this cannot be so—it cannot be so. I long so deeply to see in all Americans the proper understanding of this great issue, not an individual one, but a common one—the issue that should not only try men's souls, but make men's souls. America does not seem to realise that this Cause is a cause common to humanity, to Christianity, and to manhood.

In the old days, in the seventeenth century, ancestors of mine, French and Dutch, came to America to make their homeland there. In those days freedom and idealism were quite enough on which to build the foundations of a country and a state. I feel in my soul that they are enough to build on and to fight for to-day.

It is a terrible thing to a patriotic American to see his country insulted, the lives of its people sacrificed, its property destroyed with wanton indifference, and to see across its whole fair shape the shadow of that Mailed Hand which is disfiguring Europe.

I followed through the *Matin* your progress in the East, and you cannot think with what

WAR LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN

intense interest I shall follow your journey home.

London to-night is a little darker, the lamps, once softened, are now encircled by blue shades, and there is a more marked absence of men. Here the evidences of what we all know are nevertheless not so great.

I might almost say that under your window (for I stayed in your house just now while I was in Paris) all day long passed that sacred and solemn procession of the wounded, men without legs and arms, blind, and disfigured. It seemed as though those who could walk at all had been turned into the streets to make room for the flood of newly wounded men. It is terrible.

I embark to-morrow with faith because I have such confidence in England, and it has been a source somewhat of amusement to me when I have heard the United States diplomats flatter themselves that they have affected submarine warfare by *Notes*. England, mighty upon the seas, has done it all, and if it had not been for their fleet and the Genius of Marine there wouldn't be any Europe such as we know it to-day.

I send my greetings to Robert and to you, and they will find you on your far-off mission where you have gone to follow the war in the Far East, and I send you what is to us all a summons and a hope: "Home for Christmas."

M. V. V.



UCSB LIBRARY

University of California
SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY
405 Hilgard Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90024-1388
Return this material to the library
from which it was borrowed.

REC'D LD-URL

QL JAN 16 1996

JAN 09 1996

REC'D LD-URL
QL JAN 13 1997

MAR 18 1997

MAR 28 1997

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY



A 000 650 275 1

University of California
Southern Region
Library Facility